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EIGHT SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

IN THE YEAR 1781,

AT THE LECTURE FOUNDED BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN BAMPTON, M. A.

CANON OF SALISBURY.

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CHAPLAIN OF MERTON COLLEGE.

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M DCC LXXX I.

PREFACE.

THE following plain Diſcourſes are ſent abroad into the world merely in compliance with the injunctions of the Founder of that annual Lecture at which they were preached. With regard to the manner in which the Author of them hath diſcharged the truſt delegated to his care, He can only ſay, that with more leiſure and fewer avocations, his work might probably have been leſs faulty and better finiſhed. But he hopes the nature of his ſubject is ſuch and ſo important, as may atone for ſome defects in the execution; and that the obligation of their publication will be a ſufficient apology for it.

Many attacks have been made of late, not only on ſome of the leading Articles of Chriſtianity, but even on the general plan and deſign of it: And theſe have been indeed the more dangerous, from the artfulneſs of the mode, and from the variety and

ſpecious-

reverence due to that bleſſed Son of God, who hath done ſuch glorious things for us; and alſo hath led to an expoſition of the nature and efficacy of our Chriſtian Faith, and the neceſſity of the publick confeſſion or avowal of that ſaving vital Faith which is the natural certain conſequence of its proceeding from confirmed principles of rational conviction. But alas! as all are not Chriſt's that are called by his holy name: The laſt point, as no improper concluſion of the foregoing obſervations, is an inquiry into the cauſes and reaſons why this Faith thus important and thus recommended, is not more generally and univerſally effectual to influence the heart and affections; and how, after all, it happens, that ſo many ſhould diſregard their own plain intereſt, and that in a matter of ſuch eſſential and eternal conſequence.

The Author hopes he has treated theſe momentous ſubjects with a tolerable degree of preciſion and accuracy; and heartily wiſhes his labours may be received by others, with that ſincerity and good meaning with which they were written by himſelf.

Extract from the laſt Will and Teſtament of the late Rev. JOHN BAMPTON, *Canon of* Saliſbury.

—— " I give and bequeath my Lands " and Eſtates to the Chancellor, Maſters, " and Scholars of the Univerſity of Ox- " ford for ever, to have and to hold all " and ſingular the ſaid Lands or Eſtates " upon truſt, and to the intents and pur- " poſes hereinafter mentioned; that is to " ſay, I will and appoint, that the Vice- " Chancellor of the Univerſity of Oxford " for the time being ſhall take and receive " all the rents, iſſues, and profits thereof, " and (after all taxes, reparations, and ne- " ceſſary deductions made) that he pay all " the remainder to the endowment of eight " Divinity Lecture Sermons, to be eſta- " bliſhed for ever in the ſaid Univerſity, " and to be performed in the manner fol- " lowing:

" I direct and appoint, that, upon the " firſt Tueſday in Eaſter Term, a Lec- " turer be yearly choſen by the Heads of " Colleges

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SERMON I.

JOHN v. 39. the laſt clauſe.

They are they which teſtify of Me.

The whole verſe runs thus,

Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which teſtify of Me.

IF we attentively conſider either the exalted character of the Speaker of theſe words, or the plain ſignification of the words themſelves, we cannot but look upon them as bearing a moſt important teſtimony to the grace and condeſcenſion of the Almighty, in ſupporting the ſeveral manifeſtations of his will with ſuch clear

evidence of their ſupreme authority, that our acquieſcence in, or belief of them, muſt manifeſtly appear the genuine reſult of rational perſuaſion and conviction.

To foretel future events, to point out perſons hereafter to exiſt, and circumſtantially to deſcribe the ſeveral diſtinguiſhing peculiarities of their lives and actions, muſt, when the determined period arrives correſponding with the antecedent prediction, demonſtrate the intervention of a ſuperior Being, and raiſe the attention of the world to regard it as proceeding from *the determinate counſel and foreknowledge of him*[a], *whoſe word ſhall accompliſh that which he pleaſeth, and it ſhall proſper in the thing whereto he ſends it*[b].

Viewed in this light, the aſſertion of our bleſſed Lord in the text, if underſtood with a view to the full ſcope of this argument, is a ſufficient vindication of his divine miſſion; an ample proof that he aſſumed no novel or unheard of character; that he attempted no other change in the religious ſyſtem of the Jews than what a long ſuc-

[a] *Acts* ii. 23. [b] *Iſ.* lv. 11.

ceſſion

ceſſion of their own Prophets had previouſly and ſignificantly marked out. Inſtead therefore of being looked upon by them with an evil eye, as the enemy of their Law, they ought rather to have eſteemed him as the continuator and perfecter of it.

" [c] The Old Teſtament, ſays our Church " in one of her Articles, is not contrary to " the New: for both in the Old and New " Teſtament everlaſting life is offered to " mankind by Chriſt, who is the only me- " diator between God and man, being both " God and man." A declaration this, not only verified by that ſameneſs of plan and deſign obſervable in each, but by the expreſs teſtimony of Scripture itſelf. To this purpoſe, the author of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews begins his glorious defence of Chriſtianity with this expreſſive poſition. *God, who at ſundry times and in divers manners, ſpake in time paſt unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son* [d]; clearly intimating, that the Chriſtian as well as Jewiſh Religion owed its original to one and the

[c] Art. vii. [d] *Heb.* i. 1, 2.

ſame divine Author; came equally recommended to the notice and eſteem of mankind, and bore equal credentials of God's immediate inſpiration: with this ſpecial difference however, that the Chriſtian was to be introduced and eſtabliſhed in the world at its predeſtined ſeaſon, when it ſhould ſuperſede the neceſſity and obligation of the other.

The Goſpel of Chriſt therefore could not be propoſed to the world at its introduction, like the religion of nature, according to the ſcheme of modern infidels, as only fit or reaſonable to be complied with, but as a matter of general and indiſpenſable duty, enacted under the ſevereſt penalties by the authority of its divine Legiſlator. We cannot then wonder at the zeal and earneſtneſs of the Apoſtles and firſt Preachers of it; or that ſo many ſhould be repreſented as preſſing into that Religion which offered the Kingdom of Heaven to its proſelytes, and invited every individual to conſider it as particularly addreſſed to himſelf by that God, who hath a right to command his obedience, and a power to puniſh his neglect or rejection of it.

And

And not more with zeal, than with ſincerity and truth, did the Apoſtles *commend themſelves* [e] and their doctrine *to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God:* not indeed *with the enticing words of man's wiſdom* [f], by philoſophical and metaphyſical proofs, or abſtracted reaſonings; for theſe are not level to the capacities of the generality of mankind; but by the plaineſt narrations of facts done upon earth, and confirmed by miracles from heaven, evincing that *God was in them of a truth* [g], *in demonſtration of the ſpirit and of power* [h].

Thoſe who have attempted to maintain that ſtrange ſuggeſtion, "that Chriſtianity "is not founded on argument," ſeem to forget what hath been proved beyond all contradiction; that there are no clearer grounds and reaſons, nor any of greater moral certainty, than can and have been given for the truth of the Goſpel: But theſe, after all, have no greater weight than the force of moral evidence: This was

[e] 2 *Cor.* iv. 2. [f] 1 *Cor.* ii. 4. [g] 1 *Cor.* xiv. 25.
[h] 1 *Cor.* ii. 4.

not the apoſtolical method of arguing; which was a ſimple atteſtation of facts or hiſtorical truths, the teſtimony of which all were capable of underſtanding, becauſe it was ſuited to the capacities of all.

The Apoſtles, in confirmation of what they ſaid and what they did, were continually appealing to the written word of God, to the Law, and to the Prophets; to the Scriptures acknowledged, by thoſe who were referred to them, to be written under the immediate direction of God's holy Spirit. Our bleſſed Lord himſelf condeſcended to take this method for the conviction of others of the truth of his doctrine and his miſſion; which appears as well from the words and reaſonings of the text, as from that memorable conference with the two Diſciples going to Emmaus; when *beginning at Moſes, and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himſelf* [i]. With great propriety therefore did he aſſure the Jews, that *had they believed Moſes, they would have believed him* [k]. By appealing to

[i] *Luke* xxiv. 27. [k] *John* v. 46.

this

this allowed authority, St. Peter at his firſt Sermon converted *three thouſand ſouls* [l] to the faith of Chriſt then newly riſen from the dead. Thus likewiſe, in that noble apology which St. Paul made before Agrippa and Feſtus, he maintained that *he witneſſed* or teſtified, *ſaying, none other things than thoſe which the Prophets and Moſes did ſay ſhould come* [m]. Thus at Theſſalonica, thus at Beræa, thus at Rome, *he reaſoned and proved from the Scriptures, that Jeſus was the Chriſt* [n].

It would be endleſs to multiply teſtimonies to this purpoſe. Such appeals as they are numerous, ſo are they the ſtrongeſt foundation of a Chriſtian faith. They who receive the Scriptures as the revealed will of God will be more effectually convinced by allegations derived from that deciſive authority, than from all the ſpecious principles, or refined theories, which the wit of thoſe who are *wiſe in their own conceits* [o], may plauſibly or needleſsly invent to vindicate the ways of God to man. Such

[l] *Acts* ii. 14. [m] *Acts* xxvi. 22.
[n] *Acts* xvii. 3. 11. xxviii. 23, &c. [o] *Rom.* xii. 16.

undertakings indeed are rather ſuperfluous. The rule is this, and it is enough: If God hath ſaid it, it muſt be true; if he hath commanded it, it muſt be done; if he hath forbidden it, it muſt be avoided. Theſe are plain and intelligible truths to all, and like firſt principles are ſo ſelf-evident, that they admit of no diſpute. Scriptural arguments are therefore the ſureſt, the plaineſt, and the ſtrongeſt to believers.

They who would ſlight ſuch a ſtanding Revelation, which God hath made the ſtated ordinary means of grace and converſion, would equally diſregard a meſſenger, *though one roſe from the dead to perſuade them*[p]. Such an awful apparition might terrify and aſtoniſh them at the time, but the effects of it would be tranſitory, and would vaniſh as ſpeedily as the ſpectre itſelf: the other would approve itſelf the moſt rational, general, and laſting means of conviction, as containing the ſureſt evidences of our Faith, and being *able to make us wiſe unto Salvation*[q].

[p] *Luke* xvii. 31. [q] 2 *Tim.* iii. 15.

In

In conformity therefore to the will and direction of the liberal Founder of these exercitations, that his preachers should *confirm and establish the main articles of the Christian faith in general*[r], it surely can be no improper introduction to the succeeding discourses, to point out some of the leading or principal passages in the Old Testament, which are clear attestations of the Messiah, from his primary designation to his personal advent or manifestation in the flesh.

As the redemption, or recovery and restoration of mankind to future eternal happiness, is that gracious overture of his love which God hath communicated to us thro' the medium of the Scriptures; it may well be supposed, that sufficient intimation would be given of the means intended by God to effect it: That nothing might be wanting from time to time to strengthen the expectation, and direct the prospect of believers, in proportion to that degree of light, grace, and knowledge, which he

[r] See the Will.

vouch-

vouchſafed to beſtow upon them. Without the agency of a ſuperintending Providence, it would have been an utter impoſſibility to imagine, that a regular, well arranged, and conſiſtent plan, could be carried on for upwards of four thouſand years; and under the adminiſtration of different perſons of various countries, callings, and intereſts, who, in their ſeveral ſucceſſive generations, ſhould have the ſame point perpetually in view; to which, as to a common center, they ſhould all uniformly tend, without any the leaſt variation or contradiction. Such a continued harmony and union, both of ſcheme and ſentiment, muſt owe its progreſs as well as its riſe to that God who is *great in counſel, and mighty in work*[s], *who giveth wiſdom, and knowledge, and underſtanding*[t]. This connected plan of the divine Decrees, ſo viſibly and regularly purſued, muſt, in the ſeveral ſtages of its advancing maturity, neceſſarily raiſe the expectation, and excite the regard of every age to that grand and momentous period, which ſhould convincingly diſplay the tranſcendent dignity of that extraordinary diſpenſation ordained

[s] *Jer.* xxxii. 19. [t] *Prov.* ii. 6.

to

to be over all, and to take place in its appointed time.

Very high indeed can we trace both the neceſſity and diſcovery of a Mediator and Redeemer; *The ſeed of the woman ſhall bruiſe the ſerpent's head* [u], was the earlieſt promulgation of the deſtined bleſſing, and was pronounced immediately after that fatal tranſgreſſion of our firſt progenitor, which made infirmity permanent [w]. From hence do we date, if not the riſe, at leaſt the firſt publick intimation of Chriſtianity.

This original grace and promiſe was ſome time after renewed to Abraham, and the certainty of its accompliſhment, by repeated aſſurances, confirmed to him and his family. More explicit diſcoveries of this intended bleſſing were afterwards communicated to the patriarchs Iſaac and Jacob. To the deſcendents of the latter it was more particularly limited, being reſtrained to the poſterity of his ſon Judah; from whom ſhould proceed that great illuſtrious Prophet, whom God would raiſe up, *and*

[u] *Gen.* iii. 15. [w] 2 *Eſdr.* iii. 22.

unto

unto him ſhould the gathering or obedience *of the people be*[y]. Out of the tribe bearing his name, in later times, was the regal houſe and family of David, in a more eſpecial manner, ſelected as a type or repreſentation of the predicted Meſſiah, and the ſtate of his kingdom: the ſpirit of prophecy emphatically pronouncing that *the root of Jeſſe*, the father of the line of David, or his poſterity, *ſhall ſtand for an enſign to the people; to it ſhall the Gentiles ſeek*[z], or betake themſelves.

That theſe circumſtances, ſo minutely prophetical of the Meſſiah, were eminently fulfilled in the perſon of our Jeſus, we have every reaſonable, every poſſible ſatisfaction that the argument will admit of. We have a twofold hiſtory of his pedigree reſpecting the ſucceſſion of his natural and legal parentage, tranſmitted to us by two of the Evangeliſts, who wrote the hiſ-

[y] *Gen.* xlix. 10. יקהת from יקה. Dicto audiens fuit, paruit, obedivit, ſo Aynſworth. In this ſenſe the word is rendered by our tranſlators, *Proverbs* xxx. 17. It occurs only in theſe two places.

[z] *Iſ.* xi. 10. דרש, cum præpoſione אל, non ſignificat quærere, ſed tendere, confluere aut ſe conferre. *Deut.* xii. 5. Bootii Animadv. ad Textum Heb. Vet. Teſt. L. i. c. v. ſ. vi. p. 36.

tory

tory of his life, in the very age in which he had appeared, and within a very few years after his aſcenſion.

Had the relations they give of our bleſſed Lord's deſcent been as falſe, or inconſiſtent, as ſome cavillers have taken pains to repreſent them, they would have been inſtantly detected at the very time of their publication. The Jews would have objected to their report, and called the veracity of their tables in queſtion. As nothing of this appears, their teſtimony muſt remain unimpeached. Some difficulties may ſeem perhaps to embarraſs both the genealogies in their preſent ſtate; yet are they eaſily reconcileable, and the objections of no material conſequence: Both of them being full and clear in this principal point, (which indeed is all that we are required to believe concerning them, and is enough for our comfort and ſatisfaction) that Jeſus was of the ſeed of Abraham, of the family of David, and born in the fleſh of the Virgin Mary [c].

[c] See this ſubject very accurately conſidered, in Mr. Yardley's Critical Examination and Defence of the Genealogies of Jeſus Chriſt, as recorded by St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke*.

So

So incontrovertible was this particular, that the author of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews appeals, in the moſt direct and poſitive terms, to the Jews themſelves for the truth of it. *It is evident*, ſays he, *that our Lord ſprang out of Judah* [d]. This fact they neither did, nor could pretend to deny. His parents, at the general taxation of the empire, had been publickly regiſtred as being *of the houſe and lineage David* [e]. In a caſe of ſuch high importance, and which would be ſo much enquired into by the Jewiſh people, it was abſolutely incumbent upon the Evangeliſts to be exact and faithful in collecting and preſerving the records of the origin and birth of Jeſus Chriſt; "ſo as to deliver a truth, not only that "could not be gain-ſaid; but alſo, that "might be proved and eſtabliſhed from "certain and undoubted rolls of anceſtors, "at that time well enough known, and laid "up in the publick repoſitories, and in the "private alſo [f]."

[d] *Heb.* vii. 14. [e] *Luke* ii. 4.
[f] Lightfoot's Horæ Hebraicæ, &c. Vol. II. p. 96.

Thoſe

Thoſe perſons, likewiſe, who were more immediately called to the prophetical function, expatiate largely in their deſcription of his character and office, in all its ſeveral branches; delineating, with the utmoſt preciſion, the greatneſs and extent of thoſe bleſſings to be derived from him, who, like the ſun in the natural world, ſhould *ariſe with healing in his wings*[g]; and be the ſource and fountain of religious grace and knowledge to every people, and nation, and language: It being the principal purpoſe of their appointment *to teſtify beforehand the ſufferings of Chriſt, and the glory that ſhould follow*[h].

The Prophet Iſaiah, who, by way of eminence and diſtinction, is called the Evangelical Prophet, becauſe he foretold ſo great a variety of events, reſpecting the regal and ſacerdotal, the exalted and the humiliatory ſtate of the Meſſiah, is very copious upon this ſubject. His whole book is full of the moſt ſublime and magnificent images expreſſive of the grace, and

[g] *Mal.* iv. 2. [h] 1 *Pet.* i. 11.

love,

love, and goodneſs of God; and of the ſtate and the privileges, of the glory and the felicity of Chriſt's kingdom. He acquaints us with all the memorable circumſtances attending his nativity, with the greatneſs of his excellency, his high original, his inherent divinity, and his preexiſtent ſtate; with the value and efficacy of his ſufferings, his complete ſatisfaction, and his meritorious interceſſion; with the rejection of the Jews, and with the call and acceptance of the Gentiles. Theſe are topicks on which he dwelleth with particular ardour and energy.

This is the language of ſucceeding Prophets. *Living waters*, ſays Zechariah, *ſhall go out of Jeruſalem; the Lord ſhall be king over all the earth: in that day there ſhall be one Lord, and his name one*[i]: Jeremiah's *righteous branch of David, the Lord Jehovah our righteouſneſs*[k]: Ezekiel's *one king, and one ſhepherd of Iſrael*[l]: Micah's *ruler in Iſrael, whoſe goings forth have been from of old from everlaſting*[m]: Haggai's *deſire of all nations*[n]: Malachi's *meſſenger*, or angel, *of*

[i] *Zach.* xiv. 8, 9. [k] *Jer.* xxiii. 5, 6. [l] *Ezek.* xxxvii. 22. 24. [m] *Mic.* v. 2. [n] *Hag.* ii. 7.

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the covenant[o]. Theſe ſeveral predictions are abundantly expreſſive of the eternity, the divine nature, and perſon of the Meſſiah, and have been always conſtantly applied by the ancient Jews to the time of his appearing. To the ſame purpoſe, in like manner, Jacob's *Shiloh*[p], Balaam's *ſtar of Jacob* and *ſceptre of Iſrael*[q], Job's גאל[r], or reſcuer from deſtruction and death, and the like, cannot be conſiſtently interpreted, according to the general tenor of Scripture; if they be not conſidered as ſo many concurrent references to the perſon and grace, the power and kingdom of Chriſt. How amazingly full and particular in his predictions, and punctual in all the circumſtances of them, is the Prophet Daniel in ſtating the preciſe time of Meſſiah's appearance; and how exactly correſpondent is the narrative of the evangelical hiſtorians to the minuteſt tranſactions, ages before pronounced to be performed by him, who was to be the Meſſiah; ſo that the predictions have already received an abundant verification in their accompliſhment.

[o] *Mal.* iii. 1. [p] *Gen.* xlix. 10. [q] *Num.* xxiv. 17. [r] *Job* xix. 25.

But moreover beſides theſe direct alluſions and prophecies, there were ſeveral perſons, events, and things under the Jewiſh diſpenſation, intended either as emblematical repreſentations, or prefigurative types, foreſhadowing by ſome legal ceremony or other, the various ſtates of the Meſſiah; and in their general plan tending to illuſtrate the grand doctrine of the mediatorial ſcheme. The command to *Abraham* to offer his ſon *Iſaac*[s]; the bleſſing imparted to *Judah*[t]; the ſufferings, exaltation, and perſon of *Joſeph*; the prieſthood of *Melchizedek* and *Aaron*; the call, election, and government of *Moſes*; the triumphs of *Joſhua*; the reign of *David*; the redemption of the firſt-born; the brazen ſerpent; the killing of ſacrifices, more eſpecially of the *Paſchal Lamb*; the actions and ceremonies upon the great day of expiation, attending both the *ſcape goat*, and the *goat* appointed for the *ſin offering*, whoſe blood was to make *atonement*[v]: All theſe various myſtical emblems, whether

[s] *Gen.* xxii. 22. [t] *Gen.* xlix 8—12.
[v] *Lev.* xvi.

perſonal,

perſonal, occaſional, or perpetual, look to one and the ſame grand character which gave them their importance.

Indeed the whole œconomy of the Jewiſh law, as the authority of Inſpiration aſſures us, *was our Schoolmaſter to bring us to Chriſt* [u], having a ſecondary and ſymbolical meaning, only to be illuſtrated by a Saviour's perſon, acts, and character. And though from the nature, ſubject, and deſign of the Old Teſtament, a literal and hiſtorical ſenſe is manifeſt; yet as the ſeveral particulars were analogical to the ſigns and times of the Meſſiah, and the chief reſemblances remarkably coincident in both, they may juſtly be deemed appropriated to him, as having their completion in the correſpondent antitypes of the Chriſtian diſpenſation.

The truth of this will be evident, if we advert to the general ſcope of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews; which, whilſt it explains the whole ſyſtem of the Goſpel by proofs drawn from the Old Teſtament, (which

[u] *Gal.* iii. 24.

were arguments well calculated to convince that people,) is the beſt of comments upon the Levitical law: It alſo, by the cleareſt and moſt ſolid reaſoning, demonſtrates the reciprocal connection between the two Religions; that each in its reſpective adminiſtration tends to the ſame end, being only one continued harmonious illuſtration of the wiſdom, power, and goodneſs of God, exerted for the advantage of mankind; the one ſo elucidating the other, that the Law is not improperly ſtyled the Goſpel veiled, and the Goſpel the Law revealed, as its *veil was done away in Chriſt*[w]: that ſo from contemplating the authority, love, and counſel of God, the glory of his Son might be more conſpicuous, and that our *faith and hope* through him *might* ultimately *be* or reſt *in God*[x].

The books and prophecies of the Old Teſtament were written many centuries before the coming of Chriſt, We have received them from the profeſſed enemies to his faith: whoſe intereſt it would have

[w] 1 *Cor.* iii. 14. Εν Χριστω καταργειται.
[x] 1 *Pet.* i. 21.

been,

been, either to have ſuppreſſed the truth, or to have given a different interpretation of thoſe paſſages in the Old Teſtament, which we conſtantly appeal to as clear teſtimonies of our Jeſus being the Meſſiah. This however they have not done. Some indeed of the later Rabbinical writers have taken a greater latitude in their expoſitions of thoſe ſacred volumes: yet the more ancient Jewiſh doctors invariably interpret thoſe very paſſages, as actually prophetical of, and ſolely applicable to that perſon and character whom they ſtill fondly expect: whoſe coming is even at this day, a fundamental article of their Creed, and the ſubject of their Prayers, and expreſſed frequently in thoſe very words of Scripture which are applied in the New Teſtament to the Meſſiah [y].

In ſhort, the ſum and ſubſtance of the Scriptures is plainly this, the Revelation of Chriſt, or *the teſtimony of Jeſus* [z]. He who is promiſed in the Old Teſtament, is exhi-

[y] See Biſhop Chandler's Defence of Chriſtianity, ch. ii. ſect. i. p. 49, &c. See alſo Dr. Lightfoot's Works. *paſſim*.

[z] *Rev.* xix 10. See Bp. Hurd's Warburton's Lectures.

bited in the New as fully anſwering all the different ideas of ſo publick and comprehenſive a character [a]. If the witneſs of the former be true, ſo muſt the other, as being foretold by that, be alſo true; and, both conſidered together, amount to a full, cogent, and ſufficient atteſtation, that our bleſſed Jeſus was the perſon ſo ſpoken of before; that he came from God, and that his religion being thus evidently of Divine Appointment, muſt be the only poſſible way of Salvation.

Thus may we confidently truſt the cauſe and merits of Chriſtianity to a ſtrict and

[a] Totum vetus Teſtamentum Chriſtum in ſe continet, ut poſtea ab Apoſtolis eſt prædicatus. . . . Hinc diſcitur et hoc, legem et Prophetas nequaquam cognoſci, aut rite prædicari, ſi non in iis involutum Chriſtum invenias et adores. Verum quidem eſt, haud apparet in his Pannis Chriſtum eſſe involutum: quare et Judæi videre ipſum nequeunt. Contempti adeo et nulla ſpecie Panniculi ſunt, neglecta verba quæ videntur de nullius pretii verbis externis loqui, ut ſane per ſe intelligi nequeant: propterea ex Novo Teſtamento, ex Evangelio lucem inferri illis, et cognoſci ea oportet. . . . Primum ex Evangelio Chriſtum diſcere oportet: inde illico videre licet quam pulchre omnia veteris Teſtamenti ipſum reſpiciunt, et de eo teſtantur. . . . Summa hæc eſt totius divinæ Scripturæ. Lutheri Poſtillæ majores, ſeu Conciones ex evangelicis hiſtoriis deſumptæ per univerſum annum. Baſileæ, 1546. fol. Concio in Feſt. Nativ. Chriſti, p. 58.

impartial

impartial examination of the Scriptures. The facts related in them were not done in a corner. The writings which preſerve the memorials of them are not kept ſecret from public view and inſpection. All men are earneſtly invited to ſearch and enquire whether theſe things are ſo or not; that from their own obſervation they may know and be convinced of the truth and certainty of them; and that there are the moſt undoubted aſſurances of their genuineneſs and authenticity. Whatſoever is produced out of theſe ſtanding and inſpired records of truth and antiquity, cannot but moſt ſatisfactorily confirm the credibility of the Goſpel, which was from the beginning of time originally decreed to be eſtabliſhed upon the foundation of the Jewiſh covenant: for *theſe* things *were written that we might believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of God* [b]; *he of whom Moſes in the law, and the prophets did write* [c]; *who came not to deſtroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them* [d]; for to him do they all look, and *of him do they all teſtify*.

[b] *John* xx. 31. [c] *John* i. 45.
[d] *Matt.* v. 17.

SERMON II.

JOHN xvii. 3.

This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent.

THE contemplation of the being of God, and of his goodneſs to mankind, as diſplayed in the immenſe variety there is in nature, and in the beauty, order, and excellency of the works of Creation. is a noble and delightful employment of the human mind. But this, glorious as it is, affords only a ſpeculative or philoſophical knowledge of God; ſuch indeed as may convince an Atheiſt, but not

not ſatisfy the ardent deſires of a Chriſtian. To know or believe in general that there is a God, ſome ſupreme ſelf-exiſtent Being, who is the author of nature, who hath given life and being unto us, and to every other creature, muſt undoubtedly yield us no ſmall pleaſure in the diſcovery, from the exerciſe and improvement of our intellectual faculties; but can ſuggeſt to us no nearer a relation to him, than that of Creator and Governour of the univerſe.

But how low and imperfect will this ſeem, when compared with that more uſeful and comfortable knowledge which we learn from the Goſpel; this moſt reviving doctrine, *God in Chriſt, reconciling the world unto himſelf* [a]; and *Chriſt in us, the hope of glory* [b]. This acquaints us with the near and dear relation which we bear to God; that he regards us not only as his creatures, but his children; that he looketh upon us with all the affectionate tenderneſs of a parent; that he hath provided all things for our well-being in this life, and fitted

[a] 2 *Cor.* v. 19. [b] *Col.* i. 27.

us

us for eternal happineſs in a future ſtate; that by adoption and grace he hath exalted us to the high honour of becoming his ſons, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

The metaphyſical proofs of God are difficult and intricate, and generally beyond the reach of common capacities; but the Scriptures lay before us the plaineſt and moſt amiable idea, of his being a God of infinite mercy, love, and conſolation. To conſider him in no higher light than as the author of nature, is next almoſt to the not knowing him at all: *For*, as St. Paul argues with his Roman converts, though *the inviſible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead* [c]; yet he maintains, that ſuch knowledge is altogether inſufficient for practice: Becauſe, that when men *knew God*, or had thus traced out his footſteps by reaſon and philoſophy, *they*, nevertheleſs, *glorified him not as God* [d]. Though their minds were enlightened, and their

[c] *Rom.* i. 20. [d] *Rom.* i. 21.

under-

underſtandings improved with this degree of natural knowledge; ſtill their hearts were ſo darkened by polytheiſm and idolatry, that *they changed the glory of the iucorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beaſts, and creeping things*[e]. What a deplorable account is this of pagan theology! ſerving however to convince us from fact, that ſuch an imperfect knowledge of Religion which men derive from nature and reaſon, excluſive of Revelation, cannot preſerve them either from the groſſeſt idolatry and ſuperſtition, or from entertaining the loweſt ſentiments of the Deity. This is ſufficiently apparent from the practice of all the heathen nations, which ever have been, or are ſtill this day upon every part of the earth; who can be conſidered in no other religious light, than as *ignorant worſhippers of an unknown God*[f].

This was the ſtate of Religion, even in the politeſt and moſt civilized parts of the world, before the manifeſtation of the Son of God in the fleſh. Almoſt, in the lite-

[e] *Rom.* i. 23. [f] *Acts* xvii. 23.

ral

ral ſenſe of the words, *they had no hope, and* were *without God in the world*[g]; ignorant of his true nature; and paying a blind ſervice and homage to dumb idols of wood and ſtone. To evince the vaſt diſparity between Heatheniſm and Chriſtianity, and the miſerable condition of the former, there cannot be a ſtronger or more expreſſive idea conveyed to us, than that conſtant and familiar image of darkneſs contraſted with light; which ſo frequently occurs in Scripture, to denote the forlorn ſtate of that ſpiritual death and wretched ignorance which univerſally prevailed; till *God who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, ſhined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face* or perſon *of Jeſus Chriſt*[h]; who is elſewhere deſcribed as that *true light, which, coming into the world, enlighteneth every man*[i].

[g] *Epheſ.* ii. 12.
[h] 2 *Cor.* iv. 6.
[i] *John* i. 9. So is this verſe rendered by Doddridge in his Expoſition, and by Beauſobre and Lenſant in their tranſlation of the New Teſtament, and by Dr. Hammond: Compare *John* iii. 13. xi. 27. and xii. 46. in his Annotations.

To

To this celeſtial Light did the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament bear witneſs. To this evidence did the bleſſed Jeſus appeal. By fulfilling ancient prophecies; by ſigns, and wonders, and miracles; by communicating the ſame aſtoniſhing powers to his Diſciples, and by many other infallible proofs; it was clear, and undeniable, that he was that Redeemer, who had been ſo long before ordained in Heaven, revealed in Paradiſe, foreſeen by the Patriarchs, and ſpoken of by all the Prophets. With ſuch indiſputable credentials of authority, *every word which proceedeth out of his mouth*[k] demands an humble and a ſerious attention: for *never man ſpake like this man*[l]. His love and the greatneſs of his power *to ſave them to the uttermoſt, who come unto God by him*[m], no where appear in ſtronger colours, than in thoſe endearing expreſſions of his ſelected for the ſubject of our preſent meditations. *This is life eternal to know thee the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou has ſent*, as the great Prophet, Prieſt,

[k] *Luke* iv. 22. [l] *John* vii. 46.
[m] *Heb.* vii. 25.

and

and King into the world, to publiſh *the everlaſting Goſpel*[n], and *to cauſe righteouſneſs and praiſe to ſpring forth before all the nations*[o].

This is the great and glorious truth inculcated in the text, which we will endeavour to illuſtrate, by conſidering,

Firſt, The force and meaning of the words:

Secondly, The doctrine contained in them:

Thirdly, The deſireable nature of the knowledge they inſtill and recommend.

The words themſelves may perhaps well enough bear another conſtruction, and by a ſmall alteration in the punctuation, be thus rendered: This is life eternal to know thee, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent, to

[n] *Rev.* xiv. 6.
[o] *Iſ.* lxi. 11.

be

be the only true God [p]. Thus making them bear their teſtimony to the eſſential, inherent divinity of the bleſſed Jeſus and his conſubſtantiality and coequality with the Father: Thus was this verſe underſtood and interpreted by ſome of the ancient writers of the church. In this ſenſe they well agree with the reaſoning in the context [q]. Our bleſſed Lord, in the courſe of his pathetick addreſs to the Father, appeals to that original *glory which he had* in unity *with him*, as his eternal coeſſential Son, before the birth of time, or the exiſtence of things, even *before the world was* [r]; and proclaims aloud, that *having finiſhed the work he had given him to do* [s], and being *no more* to continue *in the world, he was coming to him* [t], to reſume his priſtine glory.

Taking the words however in the ſenſe and order in which they are placed in our tranſlation, they are eminently declaratory

[p] Αυτη δε εστιν ο αιωνιος ζωη ινα γινωσκωσι σε τον μονον αληθινον θεον και ον απεστειλας Ιησουν χριστον.

[q] See Wheatly's Lady Moyer's Lectures, Sermon V. p. 250, note [B.] Novatian and S. Auſtin cited by him. See alſo Ambroſius de Fide, L. v. cap. i. Inter Opera, vol. iv. p. 183.

[r] *John* xvii. 5. [s] *John* xvii. 4.

[t] *John* xvii. 11.

of

of our Saviour's mediatorial powers; expreſsly defining life eternal to be, or to conſiſt in the knowledge of God in Chriſt. Such, and ſo great, is *his* tranſcendent excellency, who is the *expreſs image* or repreſentation *of the perſon of the Deity* [u]; and who, in a peculiarly eminent manner, *could manifeſt his name* and will, *unto the world* [w]. The Almighty himſelf, from the ſpirituality and immenſity of his eſſence, is an object too reſplendent for human eyes to behold, or for the human underſtanding to comprehend. Through this appointed medium, *his Son ſent in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh* [x], hath he condeſcended familiarly to manifeſt himſelf to the ſons of men; that ſo, the glories of that Supreme Being, the author of life and immortality, *who dwelleth in the light, which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath ſeen nor can ſee* [y], might be plainly diſcoverable in him, who is the incarnate *brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon* [z]: Hence it might truly, and

[u] *Heb.* i. 3. [w] *John* xvii. 6. [x] *Rom.* viii. 3.
[y] 1 *Tim.* vi. 16. [z] *Heb.* i. 3.

with ſtrict propriety of ſpeech, be ſaid of them *who had known and ſeen him, that they had known and ſeen the Father alſo* [a].

Our bleſſed Lord doth indeed in the paſſage before us, call God the Father, *the only true God*. Yet certainly, not with any intention to exclude himſelf from a right to that appellation; or to ſuggeſt any contradiſtinction between himſelf and the Father; but in direct oppoſition to idols, to the falſe and fictitious gods of the heathen world [b]. Eternal life is here affirmed to depend as much upon the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt, as upon the knowledge of God the Father: Both, in this reſpect, are ſpoken of, as of the ſame divine nature, and equal in power, dignity, and glory: the knowledge of both, as God and as Mediator, is equally neceſſary; the life of grace opening the way to the life of glory.

This is that ſaving neceſſary knowledge revealed to us in the goſpel œconomy: and

[a] *John* viii. 19. and xiv. 9.

[b] Dr. Randolph's Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity, part ii. p. 66. Dr. Biſhop's Moyer's Lectures, Sermon II. p. 54—60.

we

we then *know Chriſt*, when we attend to him as the Son of God; when, in an honeſt and good heart we receive the declarations he hath made of the will of his heavenly Father; and are thoroughly ſenſible that *there is none other name under heaven but his, whereby we muſt be ſaved*[c]. To give us the compleateſt idea of the nature of this faith; it is the uniform language of Revelation, that *He* only *that hath the Son hath life eternal*[d]. *He ſhall not come into condemnation, but is paſſed from death unto life*[e]. With ſuch ſuitable marks of love and mercy is the bleſſed Jeſus, conjointly with the Father, recommended to us as the author of our faith, the encourager of our hopes, and the beſtower of life eternal. This is the knowledge held out to us in the text.

We will now, ſecondly, conſider more largely the Doctrine taught and contained in it.

[c] *Acts* iv. 12. [d] *John* v. 11, 12.
[e] *John* v. 24.

The moſt endearing repreſentation that can be made of the Goſpel of Chriſt is, when it is exhibited as the diſplay of Divine Philanthropy, offering life and pardon to as many as will anſwer the call. It then eminently appears *the power of God unto Salvation* [f], communicating to the world the ineſtimable treaſures of that heavenly wiſdom which terminates in the honour of God, and the benefit of mankind: A knowledge not conſiſting of idle ſpeculations, but ſubſtantial virtues.

Indeed to know God as he is, and to order our conceptions aright concerning him, though an eſſential and primary part of Religion, is yet the peculiar gift of him, *from whom cometh every good and perfect gift* [g]. How vainly did the ancient philoſophers employ themſelves in the ſearch of happineſs, or the ſupreme good; concerning which there were almoſt as many opinions as men; all their enquiries ending in the ſame doubt and dark-

[f] *Rom.* i. 16. [g] *Jam.* i. 17.

neſs,

neſs, in which they were originally involved. Whereas we Chriſtians are made acquainted with every important truth, whether relating to God the firſt cauſe, or to his agency in ſecond cauſes, upon the ſureſt ground, and moſt infallible teſtimony, the word and ſpirit of God. And this is the criterion of our faith, *If any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God*[h]. The evidence of its divine authority will readily be acknowledged by thoſe, who compare the inward dictates of their hearts with the leading principles of their Religion.

What excellency of ſpeech or charms of eloquence can ſo effectually operate upon an upright mind, as the plain perſuaſive oratory of the Goſpel? How powerfully does it enforce upon the conſciences of men, the great truths of God's high Attributes, his providence, his will, his commands, his promiſes, and his threatnings? Where are the arguments for the immortality of the ſoul, a future judgement, and

[h] *John* vii. 17.

everlaſting rewards and puniſhments, declared with ſuch perſpicuity, credibility, and authority; ſo as to need no extraordinary ſkill, ſagacity, penetration, or judgement, to underſtand their import, and perceive their force? *He who receiveth this teſtimony, will ſet to his ſeal that God is true*[i], and will fulfil his gracious promiſes, *that whoſoever believeth in him ſhall not periſh*, as in his natural ſtate he certainly would do, *but have eternal life*[k].

This ſpiritual eternal life reſults from the knowledge of God and Chriſt, and is the bleſſed conſequence of the Goſpel Covenant; which, at its earlieſt dawn, was attended with ſuch prodigious efficacy and aſtoniſhing operations, as fully atteſted its author and finiſher to be God. In his own perſon he is deſcribed to be *God manifeſt in the fleſh*[l]: "It be-
"coming him by whom all things are,
"to be the way of Salvation to all,
"that the inſtitution and reſtitution of
"the world might be both wrought by

[i] *John* iii. 33. [k] *John* iii. 15.
[l] 1 *Tim.* iii. 16.

"one

"one hand [l]." Moreover, the reformation of manners, which accompanied the manifeſtation of this grace, beſpeaks its high original. When *the whole world lay in wickedneſs* [m] and idolatry, *ſubject to the Prince of the power of the air* [n], under the prevailing influence of the great adverſary to God and man; what leſs than a Divine Efficacy could convince and reclaim it? What leſs than *the Son of God manifeſted*, could ſo effectually *deſtroy the works of the Devil* [o].

It is recorded of one of the greateſt philoſophers and ſtrongeſt reaſoners of heathen antiquity, that he went thrice into Sicily to convert two tyrants [p]; and each time returned without ſucceſs. His arguments, though ſupported with all the eloquence of human wiſdom and addreſs, were not ſufficient to overcome the prejudices of thoſe two ſinners. But when Peter, full of the Holy Ghoſt, preached in the name

[l] Hooker's Eccleſiaſtical Polity, Book V. Sect. 51.
[m] *John* v. 9. [n] *Epheſ.* ii. 2. [o] 1 *John* iii. 8.
[p] The elder and the younger Dionyſius of Syracuſe. Diog. Laertius de vitis Philoſophorum, vol. i. edit. Meibomii, in vit. Platonis, L. iii. ſegm. 18—23. et Plutarchi Vita Dionis.

of Jeſus, multitudes were converted at once: and when Paul, rejecting all the ſuperfluous ornaments of man's oratory, *came and declared the teſtimony of God*[q], and *the mind of Chriſt*[r], he not only converted the kingdom of Sicily, but almoſt the whole world. So widely different are the power and effect of divine and human operation, the opinions formed by the reaſoning of philoſophy, and the conviction wrought by the evidences of the Goſpel.

Indeed, what influence could the maxims of Pagan theology well have upon the hearts of men, when it was a matter of the utmoſt indifference into what religious ſect or party any of them were received. The philoſophers in general did not attempt to enjoin their dogmas upon the cogent principles of duty and obligation. They deemed it ſufficient to conform to the eſtabliſhed Rites of their country's religious worſhip[s]. With a different view was the knowledge of God in Chriſt recommended; not to

[q] 1 *Cor.* ii. 1. [r] 1 *Cor.* ii. 16.
[s] See Pythagoras's Golden Verſes, *Init.* and Plato's Phœdon, *circa fin.*

this

this or that individual, to this or that nation, but to every creature, to the whole world, *that the world through him might be ſaved*[s]. The diſobedience of the firſt Adam had involved all his poſterity, even the whole human race, in his fall and condemnation. The meritorious perfect obedience of this our ſecond Adam, is exhibited in the Goſpel, *making* as *many righteous, unto juſtification of life*[t]. As the fall, was univerſal, ſo was the redemption, and extended to all, *for that all have ſinned*[u]: not, however, abſolutely or unconditionally; for though propoſed and offered to all, it is profitable only to thoſe who hear, who receive, and who with the heart believe unto effectual juſtification. Such a faith welcomes Chriſt in all his offices; for it admits his Revelation, truſts in his Atonement, and flies to him for Righteouſneſs and Life eternal. This is what an Apoſtle calls *the ſubſtance*, or confident expectation, *of things hoped for, the evidence*, or conviction, *of things not ſeen*[w]. On this we found our claim, our eſpecial privilege

[s] *John* iii. 17. [t] *Rom.* v. 18. [w] *Heb.* xi. 1.
[u] *Rom.* v. 12.

to

to be called the Sons of God. By this we are entitled to thoſe bleſſings, to which belong both *the promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come* [x].

Lord, may we all ſay with St. Peter, *to whom ſhall we go, thou haſt the words of eternal life* [y]: *Thy words are ſpirit and they are life* [z]; they guide us to, and *they ſanctify us through the truth* [a]; and thereby are we delivered from the fear of evil, and the power of the evil one. The ſure and happy effect of this goſpel ſpiritual knowledge, is a chearful and unfeigned obedience to the will and commands of our Maſter; for *hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments* [b]. This is life eternal, or the way and means to obtain it, thus and after this manner, *to know the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom he hath ſent.* This includes the whole Chriſtian diſpenſation, what all muſt believe and do, to inherit eternal life.

[x] 1 *Tim.* iv. 8. [y] *John* vi. 68. [z] *John* vi. 63.
[a] *John* xvii. 20. [b] 1 *John* ii. 3.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Proceed we now to conſider the deſireable nature of this knowledge.

It is the higheſt and moſt ſublime knowledge that can poſſibly be recommended; having the moſt glorious objects to contemplate, and being converſant with the moſt important truths. The wiſdom of Solomon was ſo renowned as to draw admirers from diſtant nations to hear and to learn from him: yet the Chriſtian Lawgiver and Teacher is infinitely wiſer and greater than that accompliſhed Prince, though *he exceeded all the kings of the earth in wiſdom*[c]. The doctrines of Chriſt, as taught in the Goſpel, however to *periſhing* ſinners they may ſeem *fooliſhneſs*[d]; yet are they moſt ſignal and illuſtrious memorials both of *the power and the wiſdom of God*[e]. They contain not indeed the worldly knowledge of any ſcience, art, or profeſſion, invented and improved by human induſtry and penetration: but, in them is declared the wiſdom of that Almighty Being who is only wiſe; who of,

[c] 1 *Kings* x. 23. [d] 2 *Cor.* i. 18.
[e] 1 *Cor.* i. 24.

and

and in himſelf, knoweth and ſeeth all things; even the knowledge of his Attributes and perfections, as far as the human mind can comprehend him; and his relation to all his creatures, more eſpecially to us men, to whom he thus communicates the grateful intelligence of all high and heavenly myſteries.

How diligent are we to ſearch into the hiſtories of former ages? how eager after new diſcoveries, which concern us little or not at all? how fond to hear and read of diſtant nations and people; not ſo much perhaps for any propoſed advantage, as to indulge a laudable deſire of knowledge? Is it becauſe we are delighted with the relation of things ſtrange and uncommon? aſſuredly, there is nothing can be reported of any people or country whatſoever, that exceeds the bounds of Nature or the reach of Reaſon: nothing new or wonderful like thoſe inexhauſtible and unſearchable myſteries of the love and greatneſs, the grace and glory of Chriſt, whereby *we are filled with all the fulneſs of God*[f]. Nay, ſuppoſing all to be

[f] *Epheſ.* iii. 19.

true

true which we are told of the riches, power, and grandeur of the greateſt princes of the world; what are they to the infinite majeſty of him, who is the King of kings and the Lord of heaven and earth, and to the all-ſufficient fulneſs of our Redeemer? Our knowledge of the former, however pleaſing or ornamental, is yet circumſcribed within a ſhort period of time, and the narrow bounds of our finite ſhallow underſtandings: but the knowledge of God in Chriſt, reaches from the beginning of time to the endleſs ages of eternity; and is replete with the glad tidings of ſuch bleſſings which *eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard; neither hath it entered into the heart of man to* conceive *the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*[g].

Under the influence of ſuch conviction St. Paul, though *brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the* beſt and moſt *perfect manner of the law*[h], a great orator, and an eminent proficient in all divine and human literature, *counted* all

[g] 1 *Cor.* ii. 9. [h] *Acts* xxii. 3.

theſe

theſe rare endowments, and even his national privileges, but as ſo much *loſs*, when put in competition *with the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord*[i]; which, as he elſewhere expreſſes it in very emphatical words, *is without controverſy, the great and* incomprehenſible *myſtery of godlineſs*[k], the moſt important and wonderful knowledge, and what only is neceſſary to be ſought after and acquired.

In good truth, the doctrine of Chriſt's Incarnation and Paſſion, and of his unſpeakable love in our Redemption, infinitely ſurpaſſes all that can be ſaid or thought. If this doth not challenge a ſubmiſſive and anxious attention, ſurely nothing can. This hath been the joyous conſolation of holy and pious perſons in every age of the world; this is that *of which the Prophets of old enquired and ſearched diligently*[l]; this is *what Abraham* the father of the faithful *rejoiced to ſee*[m]; and not he alone, but *many kings and prophets deſired*[n] the ſame: yea, *the* very

[i] *Phil.* iii. 8. [k] 1 *Tim.* iii. 16. [l] 1 *Pet.* i. 10.
[m] *John* viii. 56. [n] *Luke* x. 24.

angels

angels themſelves in heaven, who enjoy the beatifick viſion of God, account this knowledge of the Goſpel, this love of God in Chriſt, as a part of their happineſs; for *they deſire to look into theſe things* [o], and, with the utmoſt wonder and rapture, to contemplate and adore this *manifold wiſdom of God* [p]. What a reproach will it be to us, if we ſhould be unaffected by the love of Chriſt for us; if we "ſhould not often "entertain ourſelves with the delightful "admiration of him, and the redemption "he hath wrought for us. Towards this "good and neceſſary work, we have not "only the examples of the beſt of men "that have been, but we have them fel-"low-ſervants, and fellow-ſtudents, if that "can perſuade us, that we may all ſtudy "the ſame leſſon with the very angels, and "have the ſame thoughts with them [q]," to animate our love and devotion, and excite us to join them in their celeſtial hymns, ſaying, *bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and*

[o] 1 *Pet.* i. 12. [p] *Eph.* iii. 10.

[q] Archbiſhop Leighton's Devotional Commentary upon the firſt Epiſtle of St. *Peter*, ch. i. ver. 12. vol. i. p. 118. the laſt Edinburgh edition, 1748.

power,

power, be unto him that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, that was ſlain, for ever and ever [r].

If this be the euchariſtical chant of angels and glorified ſpirits, what better employment can we have upon earth, than to make that frequently the ſubject of our meditations, which is to be hereafter our everlaſting ſong of praiſe; that with thoſe bleſſed and exalted beings *we may be enabled to comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know*, as far as human infirmity will admit, *that* affectionate *love of Chriſt which paſſeth knowledge* [s], which exceedeth our moſt elevated conceptions. What ſublimity of doctrine, what excellency of wiſdom, what labour of love, are apparent in the myſterious articles of our redemption! It carries us back, upon the moſt infallible grounds, to our creation in a ſtate of innocency; it acquaints us with our fall, it aſſures us of our recovery, and gives us the promiſe of *an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled,*

[r] *Rev.* v. 12, 13. [s] *Epheſ.* iii. 18, 19.

and

and which fadeth not away, being reſerved in heaven for us[t]: ſhewing us in one view, what we were, what we are, and what we may hope to be hereafter. The wiſeſt ſages of the Gentile world were utterly ignorant of theſe wonderful particulars: having no conception of the ſtate from whence they had fallen, they could have no apprehenſion of any remedy adapted to reſtore them to their primitive perfection.

How have the wiſe and learned of this world continually involved themſelves in contentions and diſputes concerning the very principles of natural things? With how much labour and ſtudy did one great Philoſopher find out this untruth, that the world is eternal? How fond were the learned and polite Athenians of this ridiculous conceit, that they were the original offspring of their own ſoil, and that they ſprang, like plants and trees out of the earth, by ſome fortuitous concurrence, they knew not what?[v] How far more conſonant to the dictates of

[t] 1 *Pet.* i. 4.

[v] Ipſa ex ſeſe ſuos cives genuiſſe dicitur, et eorum eadem terra parens, altrix, patria dicitur. Cicero. Orat. pro L. Flacco.

Reaſon and the voice of Wiſdom is that doctrine of Revelation, which teacheth us, that *in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*[u]: That he *formed man out of the duſt of the ground, and breathed into his noſtrils the breath of life, and man became a living ſoul*[w]? Thus we trace our origin and deſcent, and are all the ſons of Adam, *who was the ſon of God*[x]. If the ſtudy of antiquity can delight us, here is the genuine account of the primæval ſource of things, before which there is nothing, but he who formed all things, and is himſelf *the ancient of days*[y]. And the ſame Divine Authority, that thus acquaints us with the beginning of all things, informs us alſo, that *in the beginning*, or before all things, *the word was with God, and was God*; that *all things were made by him*; that *in him was life, and the life was the light of men*[z]. In ſo eminent a manner is diſtinguiſhed the antiquity of this *knowledge of the only true God, and of Jeſus Chriſt whom he hath ſent.*

But as the moſt powerful incentive to the deſire of this heavenly knowledge, we may

[u] *Gen.* i. 1. [w] *Gen.* ii. 7. [x] *Luke* iii. 38.
[y] *Dan.* vii. 9. [z] *John* i. 1—4.

reflect,

reflect, that even in our present state of weakness and imperfection, it supplies us with the best and most lasting comfort and delight; not only from the assurance of the pardon of our sins, but from the pleasing prospect of glory and immortality. This it was which gave the Apostles and first Christians such exceeding joy and hope in believing, and such invincible courage in suffering. The same animating and well-grounded confidence will also support us under our respective trials; will make us innocent and chearful in our lives; will take off the sting and terror of death; will give us the most solid joy in believing; and, in the end, will *minister an entrance unto us abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* [a].

[a] 2 *Pet.* i. 11.

SERMON III.

1 COR. i. 21. middle clauſe.

The world by wiſdom knew not God.

The whole verſe runs thus,

For after that in the wiſdom of God, the world by wiſdom knew not God, it pleaſed God, by the fooliſhneſs of preaching, to ſave them that believe [a].

THE Goſpel of Chriſt can never appear in a more advantageous and intereſting light, than when contraſted with

[a] The tranſlators of this paſſage have ſcrupulouſly retained the order of the original words, and thereby occaſioned a perplexity; which will ſoon vaniſh, if we rectify that inver-

the efforts of the moſt illuſtrious ſages of the heathen world to inveſtigate religious truths: the little progreſs they made in their reſearches, is a convincing proof of the natural impotency of man, to *ſearch out God*, or to *find out the Almighty unto perfection*[b]. The errors and abſurdities of their theological diſquiſitions, were, in a great meaſure, the unavoidable conſequence of their preſuming to ſpeculate upon thoſe ſubjects, which neither their acuteſt penetration could explore, nor their moſt enlarged underſtandings comprehend: Yet there abounded among them perſons of the moſt exalted genius, and moſt refined abilities, who occaſionally valued themſelves in exerting their beſt talents for the inſtruction of mankind.

ſion of the phraſe, (ſo familiar to the learned languages, but ſo unuſual in our own) and render the words, not as they are placed, but as they ought to be conſtrued Επειδη γαρ εν τη σοφια τα θεα ουκ εγνω ο κοσμος δια της σοφιας τον θεον. "*After* "*that the world, by wiſdom, knew not God in the wiſdom of God*, "*it pleaſed God*, &c." That is, when men with all their wiſdom could not diſcover God in his works, thoſe evident marks of his wiſdom, he revealed himſelf to them by his word.

[b] *Job* xi. 7.

St.

St. Paul, who at his converſion was particularly commiſſioned to preach the Goſpel *to the Gentiles*[c], was well aware of their high pretenſions to wiſdom and knowledge, and therefore neglected no opportunity to prove and expoſe the inſufficiency of their ſeveral attempts at religious reformation. He lays it down, as an infallible rule, that *the things of God knoweth no man, but as he receives them* from *the ſpirit of God*[d], the real illuminator of the mind. He is ever magnifying the grace of Chriſt, and, by a variety of arguments and illuſtrations, labouring to convince them, that all the idolatry, ſuperſtition, and depravity of manners, which their own moraliſts candidly acknowledged, as too predominant amongſt them, were entirely owing to their utter ignorance of the nature of God, and the ſpirituality of his worſhip. To ſtate theſe matters fully and clearly, he took great pains to explain the ſeveral foundations upon which reaſon and faith were builded; the one requiring proof, argument, and

[c] *Acts* xxvi. 17. [d] 1 *Cor.* ii. 11, 12.

demonſtration; the other, appealing to the evidence of a divine, ſupernatural, and incontrovertible authority, even the teſtimony of God himſelf. To receive this teſtimony is faith; to know its Divine Authority, is the work of reaſon, in perceiving the clearneſs, and judging of the facts and circumſtances of the evidence.

The Saviour of the world hath moſt expreſsly aſſured us, that *this is life eternal, that men might know the Father, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom he hath ſent* [e]. This is that divine and ſpiritual wiſdom taught and enforced only in the ſchools of the Prophets and Apoſtles; thoſe *holy men of God, who ſpake*, and wrote, *as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt* [f]. This kind of knowledge therefore is the proper ſubject of religious faith; and, as ſuch, demands the ſubmiſſion of the underſtanding.

Such however is the arrogance and perverſeneſs of fallible men, the proud boaſ-

[e] *John* xvii. 3. [f] 2 *Pet.* i. 21.

ters

ters of wiſdom and ſcience, that they frequently raiſe doubts and objections even in the plaineſt articles of religious truth. Hence, ſome have not ſcrupled ſo prepoſterouſly to magnify the powers of the human mind, as to ſeem well diſpoſed to put it upon a level almoſt with the revealed will of God, and to ſet up the obſcure and imperfect light of human reaſon, in competition with the ſuperior advantages of Divine Grace. Hence the Scriptures have been depreciated to make room for the wild conjectures of heathen philoſophy; as if human wiſdom could direct us, by as near and ſure a way, to happineſs and life eternal, as what God himſelf hath pointed out in his word. Hence alſo, ſo many ingenious romances have been publiſhed in ſupport of, what the writers have been pleaſed to ſtyle, the Religion of Nature, the more to extol that, and to degrade the bleſſings of the Goſpel: This, they would inſinuate, hath no pre-eminence as a rule of life; and reflect not, it is from their knowledge of Chriſtian graces, that they ſo clearly ſee the nature and obligation

gation of that morality which they ſo affect to admire.

St. Paul, whoſe eminent abilities remarkably diſtinguiſhed him; and whoſe miſſion carried him to perſons of the higheſt rank, and to places famous for the encouragement of arts and ſciences, had frequent occaſions to debate this point. When engaged with the philoſophers and the great men of Greece and Rome, with all the arts of a poliſhed addreſs, he produced a variety of arguments peculiarly calculated to raiſe their attention, by reaſoning upon ſubjects immediately connected with their wiſdom and philoſophy. And at length declared to them, that by perſevering in ſuch *vain deceits, after the traditions of men*[g]; by their idolatry and polytheiſm, *they had*, in reality, *changed the truth of God into a lye*; for they worſhipped *and ſerved* thoſe *creatures*[h], *which by nature are no gods*[i].

Convinced of this himſelf, he was anxiouſly ſolicitous to guard all his converts

[g] *Col.* ii. 8. [h] *Rom.* i. 25.
[i] *Gal.* iv. 8.

againſt

againſt being ſeduced from the faith by *the enticing words* of ſuch *men's wiſdom* [k]; leſt they ſhould be *ſpoiled*, or made a prey of, by reverting to *the rudiments*, or elements, *of worldly* [l] wiſdom and ſcience. This wiſdom, he expreſsly tells the *Corinthians* in the words of the text, is no better than ſo much *fooliſhneſs*; as, by a partial attachment to the gaudy colourings of a verbal oratory, the plain engaging ſimplicity of *the croſs of Chriſt* would be deprived of its peculiar glory, and thereby *be made of none effect* [m]. *Where*, ſays he, *is the wiſe? where is the ſcribe? where is the diſputer of this world?* hath not God made *fooliſh*, or mad the *wiſdom of this world* [n]; by eſtabliſhing ſuch a ſcheme of Salvation which their learning and philoſophy could never have thought of? Nay, though the being and wiſdom of God were evident, from the works of Creation and Providence, yet *the world by wiſdom knew not God.* All the powers of nature and reaſon, improved to their utmoſt perfection, could never attain to the true knowledge of the Deity, or lead men to

[k] 1 *Cor.* ii. 4. [l] *Col.* ii. 8. [m] 1 *Cor.* i. 17.
[n] 1 *Cor.* i. 20. Εμωρανεν.

glorify

glorify him as ſuch; as the author and object of eternal life. But it pleaſed God to remove all theſe obſtacles, and to call them by that which thoſe ſages termed, *the fooliſhneſs of preaching*; for ſuch it ſeemed to them, as their pride would not permit them to enquire, and therefore they could not underſtand, how he, who appeared as a man, could be the Son of God; or how he, who did die, could be the author of life: though theſe important facts contained in them the greateſt miracle of Divine Power, the greateſt myſtery of Divine Wiſdom and Love.

From this view of things is exhibited the manifeſt difference there is between true and falſe Religion; that which we learn from nature and philoſophy, and that which is *after Chriſt* [o]; the one leading to error, the other the declaration of truth. Though this point was touched upon in the preceding Diſcourſe, yet it is worthy of a more minute and diſtinct enquiry. We will therefore now more particularly

[o] *Col.* ii. 8.

conſider

conſider the comparative excellency of Chriſtian graces, with their correſpondent virtues, as inculcated upon the principles of Natural Religion.

It hath already been conſidered how vain and uncertain the ſurmiſes of the ancient heathens were, when they ſought after the knowledge of God by the mere light of nature. They had no idea, becauſe they had no principles to argue from, of thoſe myſterious articles, which Revelation hath diſcovered: of the doctrines of the Trinity, of the vicarious ſatisfaction of Chriſt, of his preternatural incarnation, of his meritorious death and paſſion; theſe and the like they could ſcarce have any conception of. The ſame alſo is obſervable of the doctrine of the reſurrection of the dead; the aſſertion of which expoſed our Apoſtle to the deriſion *of the Epicureans and Stoicks*[p]; the moſt learned, and, if there could be any Religion, where there was ſo much ignorance of God, the moſt religious of all the philoſophers. Nay, ſo far were

[p] *Acts* xvii. 18.

they

they from acquiring any true knowledge, even of themſelves and of the end of their creation, that, after all their moſt elaborate enquiries, they were not able to diſcover wherein their own happineſs conſiſted. Their morality was wholly confined to outward actions; they did not, ſo much as in theory, underſtand what was the true perfection of virtue. But when they attempted to treat of the nature of the Deity, of his unity, of the ſoul of man, of heaven or hell, or, in their own language, of the infernal regions, or of a future ſtate; here their boaſted ſcience ended in fancy, or wiſh, or at beſt in probability. So vain is the expectation of gathering the fruit of true wiſdom, where it was neither ſown nor planted.

Let us however come nearer to the point, and view thoſe virtues and graces which, as men, we are bound to have, and to exert towards God and towards our neighbour. — In theſe particulars it may perhaps ſeem dubious at firſt ſight, whether Chriſtianity hath any advantage over heatheniſm; or whether the philoſophers have

have not given as good moral leſſons and rules of life, as Chriſt and his Apoſtles. Who is not almoſt perſuaded, that they have written ſufficiently about moral obligation, and well enough defined the boundaries of virtue and vice? Who alſo hath not heard of the patience of Socrates, the juſtice of Ariſtides, the integrity of Cato, the moderation of Scipio, and the clemency of Cæſar? It would be endleſs to recite examples of the very many illuſtrious men, who exhibited ſtriking proofs of rare and extraordinary virtues. But, if the light of nature, nurtured by philoſophy, be thus able to make men virtuous; ſhall we therefore take upon us to aſk, what need is there ſo greatly to magnify Chriſtian graces, when heathen precepts may, if attended to, have equal influence? If ſo, it ſhould ſeem, that the ſuppoſed aſcendency of the Goſpel ariſeth more from the prejudices of education, and the authority of teachers, than from the truth of the matter itſelf; and is grounded more upon partiality and opinion, than knowledge and argument.

To

To little effect indeed is the Goſpel of Chriſt recommended as the Revelation of the moſt high God, if the fancies and errors of men may be brought in competition with it, and any frivolous allegations be imagined able to impair its credit.

It hath been already obſerved, that in thoſe duties which immediately concern the Deity, philoſophy cannot, in any degree, bear a compariſon with Goſpel Theology. If moreover we contemplate thoſe intellectual virtues, which perfect the underſtanding, who ſeeth not, that the knowledge of God is the moſt principal, in which human wiſdom, having taken great pains, hath found little ſucceſs[q]? And in a more particular manner, with regard to the affections of love, fear, honour, and the like, and the actions whereby they are to be expreſſed, which is properly the worſhip of God, how blind, how profane, or ra-

[q] Pro comperto aliquid affirmare, aut de Dei naturâ, aut de ejus voluntate, ſolo ductu humanæ rationis, quam ſit intutum ac fallax, docent tot diſſonantia, non ſcholarum modo inter ſe, ſed et ſingulorum philoſophorum placita.
Grotius de Veritate C. R. L. iii. C. 12.

ther

ther how impious, were the ſpeculations of philoſophers. Or if a few amongſt them, endowed with ſuperior mental powers, had haply attained to ſome lively perſuaſion of the being of God, his unity and ſpirituality: yet how ſhamefully, abſurdly, and wickedly did they join at the ſame time in the worſhip of a rabble [k] of Gods and Goddeſſes, againſt the light of conviction, and the teſtimony of their own conſciences. So unable was natural reaſon to form a model of Religion, pure from the ſtains of vice, profaneneſs, and idolatry: —whereas, according to the Chriſtian ſyſtem, Religion is the mother and miſtreſs of all virtues. Nay, who is there among Chriſtians ſo void of honeſty, ſo careleſs of his reputation, who would not diſdain to be, or to be thought ſuch as the very gods of the heathens are reported and deſcribed to have been, which yet thoſe great men

[k] Quamobrem major cœlitum populus etiam quam Hominum intelligi poteſt, cum ſinguli quoque ex ſemet ipſis totidem Deos faciant.—Of ſuch Deities, well might he obſerve, ne Deum quidem poſſe omnia. Namque nec ſibi poteſt mortem conſciſcere ſi velit . . . nec mortales æternitate donare, aut revocare defunctos, &c. Plin. Nat. Hiſt. L. ii. C. 7. See alſo Cicero de N. D. Lib. iii.

themſelves ſcrupled not to revere as the objects of publick adoration?

That the argument however may ſeem not to be ſupported more by authority than by reaſon; let us try the utmoſt ſtretch of human wiſdom in moral virtues, reſpecting the exerciſe of ſocial and relative duties from man to man. The generality of the heathens had little or no other notion of happineſs, but to live with as much eaſe, plenty and delight, as they could; to which, if a certain degree of vain glory be added, we have the ſum total of all they either imagined or deſired. Relative duties, enforced by no better motives, muſt needs want their proper ſupport; and it was little to be expected, that thoſe men would be ſcrupulouſly virtuous in their behaviour to others, who had ſo little regard to their own private virtues. Their principles, in fact were very corrupt, and their practices in conſequence alike infamous; inſomuch that *God gave them up*, as the Apoſtle obſerves to the Romans, *to uncleanneſs, to vile affections*[1], and to ſuch filthy

[1] *Rom.* i. 24. 26.

vices

vices as are unſeemly to ſpeak of. This was notoriouſly the caſe over all the Gentile world; and was palliated by cuſtom and preſcription both with the learned and the vulgar. Surely the knowledge of God, and the practice of moral virtues, muſt in vain be ſought after amongſt ſuch ſinners.

There are two virtues above the reſt, which in our daily intercourſe and converſe with the world, we have frequent occaſion to exerciſe, Juſtice, and Fortitude: upon theſe the Philoſophers have deſcanted nobly, and have given ſuch rules concerning them, as have done honour to themſelves and to human nature. But, ſo far is this from detracting from the ſuperior excellency of Chriſtianity, that it is a confirmation of its merit: It ſhews, that what our Bleſſed Saviour taught is agreeable to the more exalted, rectified underſtandings of men of the moſt enlightened capacities; that it falls in with the powers of natural conſcience, and adds new life and vigour to it. If however this plea in their behalf be thoroughly examined, we ſhall ſoon ſee how much they fall ſhort of the perfection

of Chriſtian morality in thoſe common Virtues which are confeſſedly their fort.

The higheſt pitch of juſtice in the ſchool of gentile Ethicks was this rule, not to do to others, what we would not have done to ourſelves. A noble maxim this for philoſophy to give, and no mean attainment to arrive at this knowledge; eſpecially if in this negative precept, the poſitive part be implied, which is particularly enjoined to us Chriſtians. *Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo to them*[t], is our general direction. The heathen precept is calculated ſolely to prevent our doing hurt: the Chriſtian commandment is to do all the good in our power; nay, to return good for evil, even to our enemies; and in thoſe inſtances alſo wherein we have ſuffered by them.

The light of reaſon does indeed forbid us to do evil by injuſtice; the light of grace exhorts us to do good from the principles of duty. He who doeth no injury, is deemed virtuous by philoſophy: but, by

[t] *Matt.* vii. 12.

our

our divine law, he who forbears to do another the ſame kindneſs he would wiſh to receive himſelf, is a ſinner. As much then as doing virtuouſly is ſuperior to doing nothing, ſo much more refined and excellent is the Chriſtian precept of juſtice, than the heathen notion of it.

To evince this, let us conſider what one of the beſt and wiſeſt of the gentile Philoſophers advances upon this ſubject in his celebrated Book of Offices; a laboured ſyſtematical performance, which is univerſally allowed to be the beſt of its kind, and the greateſt effort of human wiſdom, and compare it with our theology. The firſt duty, ſays this great Reaſoner, of juſtice is, that no man hurt another, except he be provoked by an injury [u]. Is this a doctrine fit to be named with the Chriſtian law? Shall he preſume to direct us in our duty to one another, who allows us the liberty of revenge, when irritated by an injury? What a more ſublime and generous leſſon doth our maſter dictate to us, *Love your enemies, bleſs*

[u] Juſtitiæ primum munus eſt, ut ne cui quis noceat, niſi laceſſitus injuria, Cicero de Offic. L. i. C. 7.

them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you [w]. We are excited to the performance of this amiable diſintereſted virtue, from the view of God's univerſal benignity, and our relation to, and reſemblance of him, when we cultivate ſo godlike a principle; when we thus *overcome evil with good* [x], and abhor and ſuppreſs every vindictive tendency.

If we conſider the other capital virtue of fortitude; the higheſt elevation of it amounted only to repelling an injury [y], and teſtifying a ſtoical inſenſibility and contempt of death [z]; though not, at the ſame time, without ſhuddering at the terrors of it [a]. But what innumerable teſtimonies

[w] *Matt.* v. 44. [x] *Rom.* xii. 21.

[y] Fortes et magnanimi ſunt habendi, non qui faciunt, ſed qui propulſant injuriam. Cicero de Offic. L. i. S. 19.

[z] Appellata eſt enim a viro virtus, viri autem propria maxime eſt fortitudo, cujus munera duo ſunt maxima, mortis doloriſque contemptio. Tuſcul. Quæſt. L. ii. S. 17.

[a] Here all their heroiſm failed them. It was *ſo like taking a leap in the dark*, that it is no wonder if they who reckoned themſelves moſt worthy of life, ſhould teſtify the greateſt indignation, when they found themſelves likely ſoon to be deprived of it and all its bleſſings; for they looked not into futurity. The Grecian moraliſt ſcruples not to ſay, Ει δη τοιουτον εστι και το περι την ανδρειαν, ο μεν θανατον και τα τραυ-

ματα

can Chriſtianity produce of ſaints, martyrs, and confeſſors, of every age and ſex, infinitely ſurpaſſing the reports of heathen hiſtories; and amply expreſſive of that patience, magnanimity, and joy which they manifeſted in their trials and ſufferings *for the word of God, and for the teimony of Jeſus* [b].

Cato is highly and repeatedly extolled, by the ſame great author above referred to, for his fortitude in being his own executioner [c]. But ſurely the deſperate exit of that celebrated perſon, ſo renowned for his

μαλλον λυπηρα των ανδρειων και ακοντι εχει. υπομενει δε αυτα, οτι κρειττον, η οτι αισχρον, το μη. και οσων αν μαλλον τις αρετην εχη απασαν, και ευδαιμονεστερος η, μαλλον επι τω θανατω λυπησεται. τω τοιουτο γαρ μαλιστα ζην αξιον, και ετος μεγιστων αγαθων αποστερειτον ειδως. v. Ariſtotelis Ethic. Nicom. L. iii. C. 9. A few chapters before he had mentioned death as the object of the greateſt terror, becauſe it was the concluſion or end of all things. L. iii. C. 6. Indeed, he could not well conſider it in any other light; having in his firſt book, after much logical debate, concluded the chief good of man to conſiſt only of things connected with the happineſs and enjoyments of this preſent life.

[b] *Rev.* vi. 9.

[c] Cato autem ſic abiit e vita, ut cauſam moriundi nactum ſe eſſe gauderet. Vetat enim dominans ille in nobis Deus injuſſu hinc nos ſuo demigrare: cum vero cauſam juſtam Deus ipſe dederit .... tanquam a magiſtratu aut ab aliqua poteſtate legitima, ſic a Deo evocatus atque emiſſus exierit. Tuſcul. Quæſt. L. i. S. 30.

auſtere inflexibility, ought rather to be aſcribed to fear and weakneſs, than to real fortitude of mind [d]. Had he poſſeſſed the true ſpirit of heroical reſolution, he would have triumphed over the malice of a conquering enemy. He would have deſpiſed that power, whoſe rage and tyranny he ſo greatly apprehended, as to lay violent hands upon himſelf; that he might cowardly fly from it, and avoid the mortification of being obliged to the clemency of his adverſary, for the preſervation of his life.

In the next place, let us carry on the compariſon farther, and attend to the motives, influence, and efficacy of religious principles. Here the ſuperiority of the Goſpel will appear to great advantage; as its views exceed thoſe of human wiſdom, not only in diſcerning what true virtue is, but in effecting a virtuous obe-

[d] Ille eas quæ nunc ſunt, et futura viderit, et ne fierent, contenderit, et, facta ne videret, vitam reliquerit.

Ep. ad Atticum, L. xii. Ep. 4.

Hæc differentia naturarum tantam habet vim, ut nonnunquam mortem ſibi ipſe conſciſcere alius debeat, alius in eadem cauſa non debeat . . . . Catoni autem cum incredibilem tribuiſſet natura gravitatem, eamque ipſe perpetua conſtantia roboraviſſet, ſemperque in propoſito ſuſceptoque conſilio permanſiſſet, moriendum potius, quam tyranni vultus adſpiciendus fuit. De Offic. L. i. S. 31.

dience,

dience. True it is, that ſome amongſt us may have ſo high a veneration for the writings of the pagan moraliſts, as to be able to ſelect from the maſs ſome ſhining fragments, and to diſplay them with uncommon triumph and oſtentation, as ſufficiently powerful and perſuaſive to the love and practice of virtue, ſo as to render other inducements abſolutely needleſs.

But in moral duty and obligation, we muſt attend to the matter itſelf, more than to the force of oratory or laboured rhetorick, as the ſtrongeſt means of perſuaſion; and beſides the duty recommended muſt be either neceſſary, ſuitable, or convenient. In this reſpect, how much more forcible muſt Chriſtian motives be, than thoſe of nature. If authority can influence, what are men to God? Wiſe men, ſuppoſing them ſuch to wiſdom itſelf? If evidence of truth be looked for, the ſame points have the ſame proofs in one, as in the other, with the peculiar confirmation of certainty in the word of God: An irreſiſtible argument this, which philoſophy was ignorant of, and could not pretend to. The beſt of the ancient ſages were but men, their

their writings only the compoſitions of men, reaſoning from preſumption and probability, not from aſſurance and demonſtration; whereas the Revelation of God muſt be true: It commands, as well as teaches: It hath the ſanction and obligation of an eternal and immutable law, which the other hath not and wants.

What moreover is the ground upon which human Wiſdom forms her exhortations to Virtue? and what are the motives to ſupport it? Chiefly this, that Virtue was to be deſired for its own ſake, and was its own reward. A ſlippery ground indeed, where even ſtrong men could hardly keep their footing, and the reſt were ſure to fall [d]. It is almoſt next to an impoſſibility to perſuade him, who looketh for happineſs only in this life, where ſenſe too commonly warps the judgement, that virtue is feli-

[d] Hæc cauſa eſt, cur præceptis eorum nullus obtemperet; quoniam aut ad vitia erudiunt, ſi voluptatem defendunt; aut ſi virtutem aſſerunt; neque peccato Pœnam minantur, niſi ſolius turpitudinis; neque virtute ullum præmium pollicentur, niſi ſolius honeſtatis, et Laudis; cum dicant, non propter aliud, ſed propter ſeipſam expetendam eſſe virtutem.
L. C. Lactantius, L. iii. S. 27.

city;

city; ſince daily experience muſt convince him of the contrary. Upon how much better a foundation do we Chriſtians build our hopes of happineſs, even upon the veracity of *God who cannot lye*[e]; and in conſequence thereof upon his goodneſs, which hath been by the cleareſt demonſtration evinced to us in Chriſt Jeſus. In goſpel language, holineſs or righteouſneſs is called, in one word, obedience; ſin or vice, diſobedience. Hence do we learn, that virtue (or godlineſs, as Revelation calls it) is to be deſired and followed, becauſe commanded by God, who beſt knows what is right and true: and as we and all things elſe received our being from his will and appointment, what he commands muſt be good and juſt, and his will muſt be the rule of goodneſs to all his creatures. This is that eternal foundation which cannot be ſhaken; this the rock upon which Chriſt hath builded his Church ſo firm, that it cannot be overthrown.

The chief arguments amongſt the heathens to enforce the love and practice of

[e] *Tit.* i. 2.

virtue

virtue ſprang from this principle, the hope of glory among men after their deceaſe, or a poſthumous reputation, which they dignified with the pompous name of immortality. Hence one of their graveſt writers heſitates not to affirm, that there would be nothing left to encourage worthy men to virtuous actions, if we take away the reward of praiſe and glory [f]. Though this ſame philoſopher wrote a treatiſe to prove, that virtue alone is ſufficient to make men happy [g]. And yet this very virtue which was thus to confer all this felicity, he did not deem to be the gift of God, but a perſonal acquiſition [h].

[f] Nullam enim virtus aliam mercedem laborum, periculorumque deſiderat, præter hanc laudis, et gloriæ.
Cicero. Orat. pro Archia Poeta, S. 11.
The ſame reflection occurs in the fifth Philippick; and in a fragment preſerved by Lactantius he expreſſes himſelf in theſe words. Vult plane virtus honorem; nec eſt virtutis ulla alia merces. Lactantius, L. v. S. 18.

[g] Tuſcul. Diſput. L. v.

[h] Virtutem nemo unquam acceptam Deo retulit. Nimirum recte: propter virtutem enim jure laudamur, et in virtute recte gloriamur: quod non contingeret, ſi id donum a Deo, non a nobis haberemus . . . Num quis, quod bonus vir eſſet, gratias Diis egit unquam? at quod dives, quod honoratus, quod incolumis, jovemque optimum, maximum, ob eas res appellant, non quod nos juſtos, temperatos ſapientes efficiat, ſed quod ſalvos, incolumes, opulentos, copioſos . . . . Judicium

Alas! what a ſtrange kind of immortality was that, which depended upon a breath of air, and the applauſe of a capricious multitude, without any other view, than to have a name recorded in the annals of hiſtory. The hopes of a future ſtate could have no weight with men of this claſs: They knew not what it meant. The love of fame, not the deſire of happineſs, was their ruling paſſion. Not but that fear of puniſhment was as much the check, as this luſt of renown was the ſpur to their outward actions. Poor incentives theſe to real inward virtue, which is neither to be enforced by terror like a ſlave, nor allured by the wages of an hireling.

With nobler views doth Goſpel Theology, which is morality exalted, perſuade Men. To know by expreſs Revelation, that *godlineſs hath the promiſe of the life that*

cium hoc omnium mortalium eſt, fortunam a Deo petendam, a ſeipſo ſumendam eſſe ſapientiam.

De Nat. Deorum, L. iii. S. 36.

What a falling off is here, from the grand and elevated ſentiments delivered in *Sect.* 66. *Book* ii. of the ſame work.

now

now is, and of that which is to come[i], is the utmoſt that wiſe and good men could wiſh for, to direct and animate them in the purſuit and practice of Religion. Can we think, that virtue when alone is more lovely and deſireable, than when the aſſurance of God's love and favour is ſuperadded to the pleaſing conſciouſneſs of having done our duty? Though it may be poſſible to attain to ſuch refinement in ſpeculation, as to diſregard preſent advantages; yet who can be ſuppoſed ſo negligent and unwiſe, as to deſpiſe that perfection of virtues which unqueſtionably leadeth to everlaſting life?

Some indeed of the brighteſt characters of antiquity puſhed their enquiries ſo far as to arrive at ſome confuſed notion of the immateriality of the ſoul, but mixed with ſo much uncertainty and error, and ſpoken of with ſo much doubt and diffidence, that it may well be queſtioned whether they really believed it or no[k]. Some

[i] 1 *Tim.* iv. 8.

[k] See Dr. Randolph's Sermon upon *Rom.* i. 20. entitled, The Uſe of Reaſon in Matters of Religion, p. 24.

imagined

imagined human ſouls to be particles of the Deity, or anima mundi; that as ſuch they might have pre-exiſted in an unknown ſeparate ſtate; and might, as probably, exiſt after the diſſolution of the Body. Others ſuppoſed a tranſmigration of them from one body to another; and that they went to ſome fortunate iſlands or elyſian fields during their ſtate of ſeparation from the Body. With ſuch extravagant and chimerical reveries did they amuſe themſelves; betraying utter ignorance of the ſubject in queſtion, and that all which they ſaid, was mere fiction and groundleſs conjecture.

But whatever imaginary notions they might entertain of a future ſtate, it was only the ſuppoſition of the ſoul's ſeparate exiſtence. They had not the leaſt thought or apprehenſion of the immortality of the body by a reſurrection from the dead. Here the voice of natural Religion was totally ſilent. Indeed ſome elevated minds, in their philoſophical retreats, went ſo far as to imagine the body might perhaps be nothing more than the ſhell or covering, not the man himſelf. Sometimes they called it

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the priſon, ſometimes the grave of the ſoul; which never could enjoy its full and perfect liberty, till it had ſhaken off its mortal periſhable part. Theſe were but the gueſſes of a few: Had they been favoured with our light and certainty, how would they have exulted in the glorious hope, that both body and ſoul, would hereafter be united and purified in a ſtate of complete and endleſs bliſs.

This is the knowledge which the Goſpel alone can diſcover: this is the comfort it offers to us, from the ſupreme authority and pleaſure of the Almighty; from him cometh our wiſdom and truth, our knowledge and certainty. Whereas the light of nature being grounded upon human wiſdom and reaſon corrupted and depraved; can only ſpeak of ſuch great articles by weak arguments, and often from uncertain likelihoods concludes certain untruths. Such and ſo great is the difference between the wiſdom of God and the wiſdom of man. From the former, we have all that the ſaving knowledge of divine Revelation can impart: from the latter, only what the imperfect

perfect surmises of uninformed opinion can suggest, without any authority to support such random suppositions.

By the comparison in these few particulars here attempted, the superior excellency of the Gospel State is clear and manifest. We cannot but acknowledge, that no precepts of philosophy can so instruct us, no examples of history so move us, no sweetness of numbers so allure us, no force of eloquence so persuade us to godliness or virtue, as the motives, evidence, and authority of the revealed will of God. So great and powerful is the wisdom of God, so weak and unavailing the wisdom of man's reason.

Thus doth God *destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent* [1]. But notwithstanding this demonstration of the spirit, and power, and wisdom of God, there are those who obstinately resist such evidence. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them,*

[1] 1 *Cor.* i. 19.

becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned[m]. They are not proved from principles of natural knowledge, which is the only wiſdom he admires. Such human reaſoners did from the beginning, ſuch do ſtill reject and oppoſe the Goſpel; while the charms of the *wiſdom of words*[n], and the arts of eloquence are abuſed to deprive us of our conſolation, and to rob us of our reward in Chriſt[o]. They may indeed pretend great matters, to ſet us free from the prejudices of education, and the burthenſome yoke of Revelation. But for what purpoſe? unleſs to bring us into the wretched ſtate of heatheniſm; that is, of doubt, of ignorance, of error, and perplexity. Whatſoever ſuch diſputers may affirm, none can be real friends to virtue, who are enemies to Chriſtianity.

Let not therefore our conſtancy be ſhaken by thoſe falſe pretences to clearer light, or

[m] 1 *Cor.* ii. 14. [n] 1 *Cor.* i. 17.

[o] Such endeavours *to corrupt the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt*, (2 *Cor.* xi. 3.) the Apoſtle in one place calleth εν πειθανολογια, (*Col.* ii. 4.) in another, εν πειθοις ανθρωπινης σοφιας λογοις, (1 *Cor.* ii. 4.) that he might guard us againſt being ſeduced by ſuch plauſible ſpecious reaſonings, which are founded more upon the ſubtlety of evaſions, and the arts or embelliſhments of ſtyle and language, than the force of truth and conviction.

greater

greater knowledge. Of divine matters Reaſon alone is an incompetent judge, and can go no farther than opinion, which may be ill founded and erroneous: Now error in ſpeculation is often the real cauſe, and more often the alleged and pretended cauſe of immoral and vicious practice. Let divine Revelation therefore, the unerring rule of our Faith have its perfect work; let it correct our opinions, and direct our conduct. Let us hold faſt our profeſſion, as we are taught; knowing from whom we have learned, and how ſure and certain *the hope of our calling is* [p] *in Chriſt, who is both the power, and the wiſdom of God* [q] unto Salvation.

[p] *Epheſ.* i. 18. [q] 1 *Cor.* i. 24.

SERMON IV.

GAL. III. 21. latter part.

——— *If there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteouſneſs ſhould have been by the law.*

THERE is no point, which the inſpired writer of this Epiſtle hath more in view, than preciſely to ſtate the diſtinction between the law and the Goſpel [a], and convincingly to diſplay, by a

[a] Lex notat eam verbi divini partem quæ præceptis et interdictis conſtat, cum pollicitatione præmii erga eos qui dicto audientes ſunt, et Comminatione pœnæ in immorigeros.

Evangelium ſignificat doctrinam Gratiæ pleniſſimæque ſalutis in Chriſto Jeſu, ab electis peccatoribus recipiendæ per Fidem. Witſii Animadverſiones Irenicæ, cap. xvii. De prædicatione Legis et Evangelii, p. 218.

great variety of arguments, the manifeſt ſuperiority of the latter. Being called to the apoſtolical office by the miraculous interpoſition of God himſelf, by an extraordinary *light from heaven, above the brightneſs of the ſun*[b] in its meridian ſplendour: he was not *diſobedient unto the heavenly Viſion*[c]. Satisfied that the ſame high and Divine Authority which had, in ſo memorable a manner, *ordained him a Preacher, and an Apoſtle*[d], *was not of men, neither by man*[e], but was the direct immediate Revelation of God; he was the more unwearied in his labours, to inſpire others with equivalent ſentiments of the truth and importance of the doctrines he had received from ſo ſupreme and unerring an inſtructor.

When he addreſſed himſelf to the Gentiles, his aim was to demonſtrate the abſolute impoſſibility of their attaining the true knowledge of Religion from the weak efforts of Reaſon and Philoſophy; which knowledge, in the preſent depraved and corrupted ſtate of human nature, could

[b] *Acts* xxvi. 13. [c] *Acts* xxvi. 19.
[d] 1 *Tim.* ii. 7. [e] *Gal.* i. 1.

only

only be acquired by the communications of a divine Revelation. When concerned with the Jews, he purſued a different plan of argumentation: He acknowledged the divine Original of the Moſaical diſpenſation; but contended that they had overlooked and ſtrangely miſtaken the whole ſcope and intention of it, by a ſervile attachment to the external letter of it. They boaſted, that in their law, diſtinguiſhed ordinarily into moral, judicial, and ceremonial commandments, was contained every thing neceſſary to life and happineſs: and that the punctual performance of the ritual ordinances gave them a ſufficient plea of merit, to ſecure their acceptance with God. They were of the ſeed of Abraham; they had the promiſes of God; they were in the covenant with him, and therefore were undoubtedly entitled to the benefits of it.

In oppoſition to theſe aſſertions the Apoſtle maintained, that they only which *are of faith, are* to be reckoned *the children of Abraham*[f]: for the promiſe, being made to

[f] *Gal.* iii. 7.

him whilſt *he was in* a ſtate of *uncircumciſion* [g], appertained equally to Gentiles and to Jews. True he granted it certainly was, that to render this promiſe more ſignally conſpicuous, (however univerſally gracious the deſign of it was) it was not only appropriated to Abraham, but alſo particularly limited by God himſelf to a ſingle individual of his family; *for he ſaith not, and to ſeeds as of many; but as of one, and to thy ſeed, which is Chriſt* [h]: thus making it to center in one perſon deriving his natural deſcent from him [i]. But it was through this extraordinary perſon, (he argued) that the great bleſſing exhibited in the covenant was to be communicated indifferently, and without reſpect of perſons, to as many as ſhould hereafter believe in his name. Such is the ſubſtance of the Apoſtle's reaſoning contained in this and the ſubſequent chapter.

Indeed his whole deſign and intention, in this paſtoral charge to the Galatian

[g] *Rom.* iv. 10.
[h] *Gal.* iii. 16.
[i] Doddridge's Family Expoſitor. Vol. v. p. 50. note (a).

church,

church, is plainly calculated to confirm the peculiar excellency of the Goſpel of Chriſt, to repreſent the bleſſings and privileges of it in the moſt engaging and affectionate light, and to vindicate it from the impoſitions of thoſe Moſaical rites and ceremonies, which the new converts from Judaiſm were too apt to imagine, on account of their divine original, ought not to be ſuddenly ſuperſeded. This gave him the opportunity to enlarge upon the ſpiritual tendency of the Goſpel; that *Moſes was faithful as a ſervant*, in his delivery of the law of rites and ſhadows: *but Chriſt as a Son* [k], was in a ſuperior light, the diſpenſer of grace and truth, the life and ſubſtance of the things teſtified beforehand concerning him by the Jewiſh Lawgiver. He exhorted them therefore *to ſtand faſt in the liberty wherewith Chriſt had made them free, and not to be entangled again with the* burthenſome ceremonial *yoke of bondage* [l]; a *yoke, which*, how long ſoever they had been habituated to it, *neither their fathers nor they were able to bear* [m].

[k] *Heb.* iii. 5, 6.
[l] *Gal.* v. 1.
[m] *Acts* xv. 10.

This

This was a favourite topick with him, and makes a principal part in thoſe other Epiſtles, wherewith he hath enriched the Church: He eagerly took occaſion, when ever occaſion offered, to magnify the grace of Chriſt, and to explain the nature of *juſtification by faith, without the deeds* or works *of the law*[n]. This alſo is the purport of the whole Epiſtle to the Hebrews, which is generally imputed to him, as the writer of it, from the ſimilarity of the arguments adduced to prove the impotency of the law, whether moral or Moſaical, to juſtify men in the ſight of God; for the *law made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope, by the which we draw nigh unto God*[o] and find acceptance with him, adminiſtred and ſupplied that which was wanting.

When this *better hope* was manifeſted, as it was firſt to be propoſed to the Jews, it was incumbent upon the promulgators of it, to ſhew its connection with their Reli-

[n] *Rom.* iii. 28.
[o] *Heb.* vii. 19.

gion.

gion. Many accordingly were convinced by referring to the things *witneſſed by the law and the prophets* [p], and *believed the record which God gave of his Son Jeſus Chriſt* [q]. But ſome of them, either unwilling or unable at once to relinquiſh all the prejudices of their education and their ancient principles, were earneſt in their attempts to incorporate the rites of their old law with the works of their new faith; eſteeming the former, which was confeſſedly of divine inſtitution, of ſo ſacred and uncontroulable authority, as never to be abrogated.

Againſt theſe erroneous notions, the having recourſe again to ſervile *carnal ordinances* [r], *to weak and beggarly elements* [s], as they are expreſsly called, does our Apoſtle vindicate the law of Chriſt, and ſhews its pre-eminence over that of Moſes; which was only meant as the introduction to it, and was to expire when that appeared. All who *waited for the conſolation of Iſrael, all who looked for redemption in Jeruſalem* [t], expected a purer and more ſpiritual Religion, to

[p] *Rom.* iii. 21. [q] 1 *John* v. 10. 20. [r] *Heb.* ix. 10.
[s] *Gal.* iv. 9. [t] *Luke* ii. 25. 38.

aboliſh

aboliſh that variety of ritual ſervices in their temple-worſhip; *which*, to anſwer the wiſe ends of Providence, *were impoſed on the* Iſraelites only for the deſtined *time of reformation* [u], and till that ſuperior and ultimate diſpenſation appeared, which was ſo to correct and order all things, that they might beſt attain their perfect ſtate.

For notwithſtanding the foundation of the moral Law, and the Levitical religious obſervations were of God's appointment and direction; yet as they conſiſted chiefly of ſuch lifeleſs external ceremonies, which did not reach the inward man, they could not confer peace and pardon of ſins, or certainty of eternal life. *If* ſuch *a law had been given, which could have given life* by man's perfect obedience to it, *verily righteouſneſs ſhould have been by the law. But*, ſays the Apoſtle, ſo far is the law from introducing any juſtifying righteouſneſs, that *the Scripture hath concluded all* [w], both Jews and Gentiles alike, *under ſin*,

[u] *Heb.* ix. 10.

[w] *Gal.* iii. 22. Συνεκλεισεν i. e. declaravit omnes Homines conclusos et captivos teneri ſub poteſtate et dominio Peccati, mortiſque ac damnationis reos. Stockius ſub voce κλειω.

ſhut

ſhut them up together, as ſo many condemned priſoners; *that the promiſe made to Abraham*, that *in his ſeed ſhall all the nations upon earth be bleſſed*[x], *might be given to them that believe*, and truſt in that method of juſtification and acceptance, *which ſhould afterwards be revealed*[y]. Hence, if they were made ſenſible of the miſery of their fallen ſtate, they might be delivered as well from the bondage of the natural law, which tended only *to darken the underſtanding, and to blind the heart*[z]; as from the laborious ſervices of the Jewiſh law, which was now only to be conſidered as having been their rigid *ſchoolmaſter to bring them unto Chriſt*[a]: *For all* men *are the children of God by faith in him*[b].

The many deficiencies and imperfections of the natural and moral law were the ſubjects of the laſt diſcourſe. The words now before us evidently mark the ſame or equal defects

[x] *Gen.* xxii. 18. [y] *Gal.* iii. 22, 23. [z] *Epheſ.* iv. 18.
[a] *Gal.* iii. 24. [b] *Gal.* iii. 26.

Firſt,

First, In the Mosaical or ceremonial law.

Therefore, from the manifest impotency of both, to make satisfaction for past offences, and to secure a title to eternal life, will follow,

Secondly, The necessity of a better law, to ascertain these blessings.

After what hath been already remarked, a few observations will suffice to note the comparative weakness and unprofitableness of the Mosaical law, and its insufficiency to answer the great ends of life and salvation. First, because the original promises of this institution, taken independently of posterior declarations, or prophetical illustrations, were merely of a temporal nature; such as either related solely to the circumstances of this present life; or such, as when viewed in contradistinction to the law of grace, life, and spirit, may warrant us to term the institution itself an occasional dispensation. The hopes and future prospect

pect of the Jews were therefore confined within a narrow compaſs. From rigidly and pertinaciouſly adhering to the preſcriptive ceremonial part of their Religion, as being of itſelf the available means of juſtification and ſalvation, they were thereby diverted from attending to the ſpirituality of the promiſes hidden under the obſcure veil of types and allegories: ſo that the law was to them, in effect, little better than a dead letter. A future ſtate, however the patriarchs and good men amongſt them might poſſibly believe it[b], was not openly or in direct terms, ſo promulged to them, as to be made the clear object of their faith, or the certain reward of their obedience. Even with the advantages which we Chriſtians derive from the knowledge *of better promiſes*[c], however it may ſeem deducible from other parts of the Old Teſtament, this doctrine is at beſt ſo obſcurely expreſſed in the law, or rather ſcarcely more than alluded to; that it cannot plainly and abſolutely be collected from it: inſomuch, that it hath given occaſion

[b] *Heb.* xi.
[c] *Heb.* viii. 6.

of

of much doubt and controverſy among learned men, whether it made any part of the divine Legation of the Jewiſh legiſlator; as temporal rewards and puniſhments are apparently the only ſanctions of the Moſaical covenant.

Secondly, The law was little more than a covenant of works; or, as our Apoſtle elſewhere terms it, *the law of commandments, contained in ordinances*[d]: Was an outward directory or ſyſtem of polity, the ſuppoſed alliance between God and his church; conſiſting, for the moſt part, of precepts and injunctions to duty, which required a perfect rectitude of life, without imparting ſtrength and aſſiſtance for the work enjoined. *It was not* the obedience *of faith* which was required; for what it promiſed, it promiſed not upon condition of believing, but of doing: *the man that doeth them, ſhall live in them*[e]. This induced the Jews to ſeek for pardon of ſins by their own merit, by what was their own righteouſneſs, by their own works,

[d] *Epheſ.* ii. 15.
[e] *Gal.* iii. 12.

and

and by their own ſacrifices; by ſuch external obſervances as had no real excellency to recommend them, but the command of the legiſlator. Nor could the outward law, whoſe adminiſtration they were ſo zealouſly attached to, ever inſure inward and unſinning obedience. Alas! if man in the full ſtrength of his paradiſiacal innocency could not remain perfect, where could his ſecurity be, when his ſtrength was gone from him, and ſuch rigorous demands made for the punctual performance of his duty.

From the amazing multiplicity of the precepts, from the very many injunctions reſpecting the particulars of their religious ceremonies, and from the ſeveral tedious circumſtances, attending their *gifts and ſacrifices*, their *meats, and drinks, and waſhings*[f], which were all enforced with very ſevere penalties, it was with great difficulty the Jews themſelves could diſtinctly learn all the duties of their law: It was moreover next to an impoſſibility, that they could be conſcientiouſly ſatisfied, whether

[f] *Heb.* ix. 9, 10.

they had performed them all in due prescribed order and manner; or whether, notwithstanding their great desire to fulfil the law, they might not have contracted some ceremonial impurity, if not moral also; and by that means might have reason to apprehend, that they were *not cleansed according to the* perfect *purification of the sanctuary*[g].

Such is the impotency of the law, with all its ordinances and institutions of worship, to procure that expiation of sin, the necessity of which was shadowed by those solemn representations. It enjoined an intricate course of formal, expensive, and troublesome duties, and required compleat and full performance of them all, without any security of remission, without any prospect of relaxation, or abatement. It deemed him who offended in one point, altogether guilty or obnoxious to the curse, and denounced on the transgressor this extreme malediction; *cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*[h]. Obe-

[g] 2 *Chron.* xxx. 19.
[h] *Gal.* iii. 10. referring to *Deut.* xxvii. 26.

dience

dience to such a severe law, such a covenant of works, could not be paid by any of the sons of Adam, who are all found sinners against it. Justification therefore could not be attained under it, for then it *could have given life:* And consequently Christ, who died *to redeem us from the curse of the law* [i], must be *dead in vain* [k]. As the law could not thus *give life*, so neither could *it make the worshippers perfect, as pertaining to the conscience* [l]. It is upon this account styled in the apostolical language the *ministration of sin* [m], *of condemnation* [n], *and of death* [o]. In opposition to the law of grace by Christ, which is called *the ministration of righteousness, of glory, and of life* [p].

But moreover the Mosaical œconomy, though it derived its being and establishment from Divine Authority, was only local and temporary; it was not calculated for universal practice or extent. It was limited to a few, to a particular people confined within the district of Palestine,

[i] *Gal.* iii. 13. [k] *Gal.* ii. 21. [l] *Heb.* ix. 9.
[m] *Rom.* viii. 2. [n] 2 *Cor.* iii. 9. [o] 2 *Cor.* iii. 7.
[p] 2 *Cor.* vi. 9.

or the land of Canaan, a ſmall, obſcure corner of the world: It was the religion of thoſe, who were within a proper diſtance of Jeruſalem, where was the temple of God; and where all who feared the name of the Lord God of Iſrael, and hearkned to his voice, were obliged to reſort ſo many times every year, to offer their ſacrifices, and to perform the duties of divine worſhip. This was ſuch a command, as the reſt of the world could not poſſibly have complied with, who lived beyond the boundaries or juriſdiction of this favoured land: It was not, it could not therefore be intended for general acceptation; but only to ſeparate and diſtinguiſh that choſen people from other nations; and to ſerve particular purpoſes of God's pleaſure and providence.

But as this law was not univerſally extenſive, ſo neither was it calculated for perpetual duration. It was to ſubſiſt no longer than a given predetermined period: The enforcement and obligation of its whole ſyſtem, agreeably to antecedent declarations, were to ceaſe, *when the ſeed ſhould come*,

come, to whom the promise was made[q]: whereas had it consisted altogether of essential duties, they would not only have been for ever binding; but all people every where, and at all times, must have been alike subject to it. Such an eternal law was reserved as the peculiar privilege, the singular happiness of the Christian covenant. Christ the Messiah was foreordained to be the termination and accomplishment of all the statutes and ordinances of the Jewish institutions. *He was to make* full and perfect *reconciliation for iniquity: He was to bring in everlasting righteousness*[r]: He was to establish an universal *covenant* with mankind, *ordered in all things and sure*[s], and all people, nations, and languages were to be called to accede to it: For his *gospel* was to be *preached to every creature which is under heaven*[t]; *that all men may come unto the knowledge of the truth*[u]; *and that in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, may* assuredly *be accepted with him*[w].

[q] *Gal.* iii. 19. [r] *Dan.* ix. 4. [s] 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 5.
[t] *Col.* i. 23. [u] 1 *Tim.* ii. 4. [w] *Acts* x. 35.

From this comparative ſketch of the defects both of the law of nature and of Moſes, we ſee how uncertain the duties of the one were, and how difficult thoſe of the other; how liable men were to miſtake in the former, and how ſubject to death in the latter; the expediency therefore of a better law,

Secondly, Muſt be obvious and unqueſtionable. By the trangreſſion of the law of innocency, man became ſubject to ſin, and to death the inevitable conſequence of it. He had offended his Maker, and needed an interceſſor to effect a reconciliation with him. Continuing ſtill to ſin his own poor ſtock of virtue could plead but little in his behalf, and would be but a wretched foundation on which to reſt his hopes of recovery from his fallen ſtate. The law of nature could give him no information how this could be brought about: The law of Moſes was little better than a covenant of condemnation. Neither of theſe laws could make *the comers thereunto*

thereunto perfect[x]: it being a vain imagination to expect, *that their righteouſneſs could be fulfilled in us*[y], when ſo great and ſo general was *the infirmity of our fleſh*[z]. Not being able to overcome the corruptions of nature, they leave us without the proſpect of relief or remedy, ſubject to the terrors of their curſes. And why? becauſe they *were not of faith*[a]. God had appointed ſuch a different method of reconciliation, as would glorioufly exhibit his love to men, and teſtify their filial obedience to him.

By the rigid demands of the law, pardon or even compaſſion were excluded; the ſoul that ſinned *died without mercy*[b]. The ſubſtitution of ſacrifices might have taught men to apprehend the neceſſity of a piacular ſatisfaction, adequate to the removal of the evil of ſin, and to purify that conſcience, which would otherwiſe cendemn them. The true and only way

[x] *Heb.* x. 1.
[y] *Rom.* viii. 4.
[z] *Rom.* vi. 19.
[a] *Gal.* iii. 12.
[b] *Heb.* x. 28.

of reconciliation was at length exhibited: Chriſt the Meſſiah appeared as the great and promiſed deliverer from the wrath of God, and from the guilt and puniſhment of ſin. He was an advocate of prevailing efficacy, who could ſupport his laws by his own exalted nature and authority: For he revealed more clearly, he ſealed more powerfully, and brought to their intended perfection all thoſe glorious truths and promiſes, which were before but faintly ſignified in the outward letter, and ſymbolical repreſentations of the law. The law of works indeed was good in its time and place; but the law of faith was better in its foundation and in its end: It illuſtrated, explained, and ripened the other: And when both are viewed together, they form that divine, conſiſtent, and harmonious plan by which the myſtery of God and redemption is haſtening to its final accompliſhment.

This happy concurrence was that miraculous evidence of God's good will to man, which occaſioned the acclamations of admiring angels. A grateful ſenſe of the bleſſings

bleſſings of this ſalvation, a conviction of the guilt and miſery of mankind, an aſſurance, *that by the deeds of the law ſhall no fleſh be juſtified* [c], made the Apoſtle dwell with rapture and delight upon this pleaſing ſubject: *Him*, ſaith he, that is Jeſus Chriſt *hath God ſet forth*, hath publickly exhibited [d], *to be a propitiation through faith in his* meritorious ſacrificed *blood, to declare* or demonſtrate [e] *his righteouſneſs*, or juſtifying power *for the remiſſion of ſins* [f].

Such is the nature and perfection of this better covenant, which gives us alſo the moſt compleat knowledge of our duty. What reaſon or the light of nature could do, is beſt known by what it really did do; having no ſure foundation to build upon, it could form no regular ſyſtem of

[c] *Rom.* iii. 20.

[d] προέθετο propoſuit, proprie denotat ponere ante, ſiſtere et ſtature in conſpectu aliorum, &c. Inde transfert Paulus ad Chriſtum, quem in veteri teſtamento per umbram legis exhibitum, in novo in propatulo Deus poſuit propitiatorium, atque per Evangelii Prædicationem in conſpectu omnium ſtitit et manifeſtavit. Stockius.

[e] Ἔνδειξις ſpeciatim notat demonſtrationem, qua aliquid ita dilucide ac manifeſte demonſtratur, ut appareat omnibus negarique nequeat. Stockius.

[f] *Rom.* iii. 25.

Religion

Religion or Morality ſufficiently perſuaſive to virtue, wiſdom, and holineſs. Who will preſume to ſay, it is a matter of mere indifference, whether men have a clear and certain, or an obſcure and fallible rule to walk by: a rule which cannot fail, or a rule which hath hitherto failed all mankind, the greateſt, the beſt, and the wiſeſt of all ages; the manifold defects of which are ſtill viſible, wherever revealed Religion hath not been taught, or eſtabliſhed. Revelation alone diſtinguiſhes itſelf by ſo compleat a ſyſtem of duty, as, when received, is able to convince the judgement, and to influence the practice. Our bleſſed Lord himſelf *fulfilled all righteouſneſs* [g], all the precepts of the natural and the moral law: *In him were hid*, and from him did proceed as the incarnate wiſdom of God, *all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge* [h]; and he hath left us his example as the beſt interpretation of his will, and comment upon his doctrines.

In truth, where can ſuch effectual laws and motives to goodneſs be found as in

[g] *Matt.* iii. 15. [h] *Col.* ii. 3.

the

the Gospel of Christ? Where else are the promises of the spirit of grace, that divine extraordinary assistance which so enables and strengthens us in the performance of our duty, as that, if we are not wanting to ourselves, we shall *be presented holy, and unblameable, and unreproveable in the sight of God*[i]?

There is another peculiar excellency in this better covenant, which indeed may be regarded as its greatest blessing and privilege; which is, the means of reconciling ourselves to God upon failure, and even upon repeated failure of duty, if we truly repent. Before the publication of these good tidings, who could have presumed upon the pardon of his sins? who could thought of so dear a sacrifice, so valuable a satisfaction for them as the death of the only begotten Son of God? that he should come into the world, *to give his life a ransom for* our sins[k], a ransom for our original, for our actual, yea for all our sins; *for God made him to be sin*, that is, a

[i] *Col.* i. 22.
[k] *Matt.* xx. 28.

sacrifice

ſacrifice for ſin, *for us, who knew no ſin; that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him*[l].

It is fully ſufficient for our comfort and encouragement to be aſſured, that this doctrine cometh by the expreſs Revelation of God: Nothing but his ſupreme authority could have convinced us that he had formed ſuch *counſels of* mercy and of *peace*[m]; and that Chriſt's impeccable obedience, and meritorious ſufferings were neceſſary for our redemption. Confiding in the plenitude of this teſtimony, we may remain ſatisfied with the apoſtolical aſſertion in the text, *that if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteouſneſs ſhould have been by the law.* But as *both Jews and Gentiles are all under ſin*[n]; it is only by *the law of the ſpirit of life in Chriſt Jeſus*[o], that we can have any hope *to be juſtified from all things, from which we could not be juſtified by* any other *law*[p], *even by that righteouſneſs which is of God by faith*

[l] 2 *Cor.* v. 21. [m] *Zech.* vi. 13. [n] *Rom.* iii. 9.
[o] *Rom.* viii. 2. [p] *Acts* xiii. 39.

in

in Chriſt[q], gratuitouſly made over and promiſed to them who believe in him for Pardon and Salvation.

Who this illuſtrious Perſon and Character is ſhall be the ſubject of the next Diſcourſe.

[q] *Phil.* iii. 9.

SERMON V.

LUKE II. 11.

Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord.

MANY previous notifications, great and ſolemn preparations manifeſtly indicate, that uncommon and extraordinary circumſtances are to be expected as attendant upon an event, thus formally and frequently predicted. Notices of this kind forcibly beſpeak the attention of thoſe to whom they are addreſſed, and for whoſe uſe and benefit they are more immediately deſigned; and powerfully excite them

them to contemplate the greatneſs and importance of the object in whom ſuch wonders are to terminate.

From thoſe ſeveral paſſages of Scripture which have been occaſionally mentioned in the preceding Diſcourſes, we find what various intimations and *promiſes God made unto the Fathers* [a], of their future acceptance and ſalvation; and that a long ſucceſſion of Prophets was miraculouſly raiſed up, from time to time, to illuſtrate the office and kingdom, the grace and glory, of that exalted Perſon who ſhould hereafter appear in the conſpicuous character of the Meſſiah, the Redeemer of the world. With this view, every minute circumſtance, relative to ſo ſublime an object of faith and hope, was particularly pointed out; that *when the fulneſs of the time was come* [b], the completion of the prophecies might be a miraculous confirmation of their Divine Original and authority. Whereas, if the predictions, and their propoſed accompliſhment did not coincide, all that had been ſpoken

[a] *Acts* xiii. 32.
[b] *Gal.* iv. 4.

before-

beforehand was ſpoken in vain, and tended only to deceive and to lead into error.

When man loſt his innocency in Paradiſe, the benignity of his Creator did not long ſuffer him to feel the weight of his diſpleaſure; he ſoon gave him joyful hopes of mercy and forgiveneſs. Theſe hopes, in later times, were increaſed to the full aſſurance of truth and certainty, that *God would bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs*[c], and *reconcile all things to himſelf*[d]. From the view we have already taken of the merciful deſigns of Providence, and the methods made uſe of to accompliſh this ſcheme of our redemption, we learn the neceſſity and vaſt importance of the knowledge of God in Chriſt. Hence do we alſo diſcover the pre-eminence of his Goſpel over the efforts of unenlightened reaſon, and the improved, but ſtill defective law of Moſes. Hence are we likewiſe convinced on the ſureſt grounds, that *all the promiſes of God in Chriſt are yea, and in him amen*[e], inconteſtably, invariably ſure and faithful. To

[c] *Dan.* ix. 24.
[d] *Col.* i. 20.
[e] 2 *Cor.* i. 20.

manifeſt the tranſcendent nature of him, who was the declared *mediator between God and men*[f], thoſe bleſſed Spirits that are round about the throne of God in the higheſt heavens, were required to pay their attendance upon him their Lord, in the ſeveral periods of his miniſtry upon earth. His conception was announced by the meſſage of an angel; the divinity of his perſon was proclaimed by another at his incarnation; a voice from heaven declaring alſo his divinity, was heard at his baptiſm, and at his transfiguration; the angels of Bliſs were the comforters of his humanity in his hours of diſtreſs, after his temptation in the wilderneſs, and in his agony in the garden; they alſo firſt imparted the welcome news of his reſurrection and Aſcenſion.

In the hiſtory of the chapter from whence the words of the text are taken, we find theſe angels, the delegated harbingers of his nativity, exulting as being the bleſſed inſtruments of publiſhing ſuch good tidings of great and univerſal joy, which

[f] 1 *Tim.* ii. 5.

would

would accrue from this glorious event to the whole human race; thoſe bleſſings of Salvation which *he* would bring, who is emphatically ſtyled *the firſt begotten*[g], *the firſt born of every creature*[h], *and heir of all things*[i]: A multitude of the heavenly hoſt is ſuddenly introduced ſinging praiſes to God for the birth of that gracious Being, in whoſe human nature the Deity dwelt, and who now *appeared to put away* or aboliſh *ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf*[k], and to bring *glory to God in the higheſt, and on earth peace, good will towards men*[l].

And to whom were theſe celeſtial agents ſent? to the great men of the world? No, in no wiſe. A few poor ſhepherds, engaged in their ordinary callings, and at that very time *keeping watch over their flocks*[m], had the earlieſt intelligence that this great bleſſing had actually taken place. To the *meek*[n] and *to the poor was the Goſpel to be preached*[o]. It was firſt preached to theſe low and humble keepers of ſheep; it was

[g] *Heb.* i. 6. [h] *Col.* i. 15. [i] *Heb.* i. 2. [k] *Heb.* ix. 26. [l] *Luke* ii. 14. [m] *Luke* ii. 8. [n] *If.* lxi. 1. [o] *Matt.* xi. 5.

afterwards publiſhed to, believed in, and received by the world through the preaching of a few weak, friendleſs, unlearned Fiſhermen; to convince the world, that the Almighty bringeth about his deep deſigns by means contrary to human wiſdom and policy; uſing, for the moſt part, the meaneſt and moſt unlikely inſtruments to accompliſh his grandeſt purpoſes; *that the excellency of the power may* more eminently appear to *be of God*[p], and not of man.

It may ſeem perhaps a matter of mere ſpeculation, if a prophecy be, as to its main end or deſign, unequivocally fufilled, to enquire, whether all the intermediate occurrences, which occaſionally have happened, are of importance ſufficient to engage an equal ſhare of our notice: But in caſes of general import, in matters of fact, and where Deity avowedly hath interfered, no circumſtances can appear minute or trifling which concern the veracity of God's promiſes, or the certainty of our Faith. Thus in the angelical declaration before us,

[p] 2 *Cor.* iv. 7.

the

the time and place of Meſſiah's nativity are equally aſcertained with the divinity of his perſon: And this ſeems to have been done with an eye to the accompliſhment of the ancient Prophecies concerning him, and more perfectly to eſtabliſh the truth and reality of his manifeſtation in the fleſh. *Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord.*

Let us conſider therefore,

1. The time,
2. The place,
3. The perſon,

} here ſo particularly deſcribed.

From the great variety of previous references to a preciſe and determinate period, ſurmiſes of which were not confined within the narrow limits of Paleſtine, but had, by tradition or information, attracted alſo the notice of other nations; an univerſal expectation was raiſed throughout the world, of the appearance of ſome high and wonderful Perſonage in it, at the very

time in which Chriſt was born [q]: For he was to be as much *the deſire of all nations* [r], as the peculiar hope of thoſe, *who looked for redemption in Jeruſalem* [s].

The Jews, guided by the ſure word of Prophecy, were very confident in their expectations of his approaching advent, at the very time when he appeared amongſt them. Miſtaking indeed the ſpiritual meaning, the true intention of the promiſes, they pleaſed themſelves with the vain notions of a temporal Prince, who ſhould reſtore the ſplendour of their fallen kingdom. This too readily diſpoſed them to liſten to the many pretenſions of thoſe various impoſtors and falſe Chriſts, which ſtarted up amongſt them in thoſe days. They knew *that Shiloh* or Chriſt *was to come, when the ſceptre was departed from Judah* [t]. The deſtined period for the accompliſhment of this Prophecy was now at hand. Herod an alien, an

[q] This is noticed by Tacitus, Hiſt. Lib. v. S. 13. and by Suetonius in Vita Auguſti, S. 94. and in Vita Veſpaſiani, S. 4.

[r] *Hagg.* ii. 7. [s] *Luke* ii. 38.

[t] *Gen.* xlix. 10. This was the firſt Prophecy which limited the time of Chriſt's Advent. All the three Targums concur in applying it to the Meſſiah. Many of the Jewiſh writers,

Idumæan by deſcent, though a Jew by Religion, was their king or governor; but was ſo appointed by the authority of the Roman Power, to which they were then tributaries. And not long after, when their temple and city were deſtroyed, neither ſceptre nor lawgiver remained amongſt them. Well therefore might our bleſſed Saviour reproach the Jews for their blindneſs and hypocriſy, in being *able to diſcern the face of the Sky, but not the ſigns of the times*[u]; for their objection to him as the Meſſiah, had no regard to the time of his appearance, but was levelled againſt his perſon alone, as too mean and inconſiderable for that exalted character. *We know this man, whence he is*[w], and from whom deſcended: *Is not this Jeſus the ſon of Joſeph, whoſe father and mother we know*[x]*? but when Chriſt cometh, no man knoweth whence he is*[w]. He is to be born of a Virgin in an unaccountable and wonderful manner; he is alſo to be the Son of God,

writers, ancient and modern, in like manner interpret it of him; as *Shiloh* is one of the names given to the Meſſiah in their Talmud. This is obſerved by all our Commentators.

[u] *Matt.* xvi. 3. [w] *John* vi. 42.

[x] *John* vii. 27.

by a way ineffable and inconceivable. They therefore rejected him, without enquiring into the authentic relation of his preternatural conception, and without attending to the power and energy of his miraculous operations.

Daniel's LXX Weeks, that is, weeks of years, had fixed the preciſe time of his coming. Haggai[y] and Malachi[z] had as explicitly propheſied, that it ſhould be before the deſtruction of the ſecond temple; which upon that account, as being honoured by the perſonal preſence of the Meſſiah, who taught his glorious doctrines, and who wrought many glorious miracles in it, ſhould far exceed in glory all the wonders of the former.

But moreover this particular time, when Chriſt was to be born, not only anſwered the general Prophecies concerning that event; but if we attend to other conſiderations, it ſeems alſo the fitteſt opportunity for carrying on God's good pleaſure in this

[y] *Hagg.* ii. 7. 9.
[z] *Mal.* iii. 1.

gracious

gracious dispensation. When the greatest part of the known world was under one common empire, spoke almost all one language, were ruled by one law, united by the blessings of peace, and civilized by arts and learning, then were men at leisure to listen to and to search after truth; and likely to become more and more sensible of the weakness and wickedness of their own nature, so as to feel their want of a ray from heaven, and thence be induced to desire it, to illuminate their minds. Then was ushered into the world the blessed Prince of Peace, and Lord of Life and Glory, the *Emmanuel* [a] or *God with us* [b]; who became incarnate to perfect all the mysterious abysses of God's decrees, and to procure par-

[a] עמנו אל. A name expressive of the union of the two natures in Christ: of his converse, as man, with men upon earth; and of his spiritual presence, as God, with his people *always, even unto the end of the world.* Matt. xxviii. 20. Novimus enim ex hoc nomine, 1. quod salvator noster sit verus homo. Est enim nobiscum, nobisque ομοουσιος. 2. quod sit verus Deus. Est enim אל Deus fortis. 3. quod sit una persona, Deus et Homo. Est enim Deus nobiscum. Et si consideretur hoc nomen ratione officii salvatoris, Paulus inquit, 2 *Cor.* v. 19. Deus erat in Christo, mundum reconcilians sibi . . . . . sic in Christo et per Christum Deus iterum nobiscum est: Hic est Scala Jacobi, in qua Angeli ad nos descendunt, et Deus ipse desuper gratiæ ocellis nos respicit. Glassii Opuscula Christologia, p. 414. [b] *Matt.* i. 23.

don,

don, reconciliation, and redemption for us. At this time, the very ſtate of things in the world could not but contribute greatly to give thoſe bleſſings a readier entrance, and to facilitate the more extenſive propagation of the Goſpel [c].

2. But as the time, ſo likewiſe is the place, in exact conformity to ſcriptural predictions, particularly mentioned, where this Saviour of mankind was born. The Prophet *Micah*, ſix hundred years before the time, had pronounced *Bethlehem Ephrata* by name, the ſcene of this event, to diſtinguiſh it from another *Bethlehem* in the tribe of *Zabulon* [d]; whereas this *Bethlehem* is ſpecified in the book of *Ruth* to belong to the tribe *of Judah* [e]; and accordingly St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke* in their hiſtories call it *Bethlehem of Judæa* [f]. Here *came forth*, or was born, *that ruler in Iſrael, whoſe goings forth*, whoſe generation and

[c] Jortin's Diſcourſes concerning the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, 2d Ed. p. 175.

[d] *Joſh.* xix. 15. [e] *Ruth* i. 1, 2. [f] *Matt.* ii. 1. *Luke* ii. 4.

ſonſhip,

ſonſhip, *have been of old from everlaſting*[g]. Of this we have moſt undeniable vouchers. *By the determinate counſel and foreknowledge of God*[h], the Roman emperor had ordered a ſurvey to be taken, and a taxation to be made in all the provinces of the empire. This brought the Virgin and Joſeph *to Bethlehem the city of David*[i]; that, being of that houſe and family, they might alſo be regiſtred as citizens of that place. *While they were there, the days were accompliſhed that ſhe ſhould be delivered*[k]; and there was Jeſus born.

By this it is manifeſt how human circumſtances or ſubordinate cauſes, without any previous knowledge or foreſight, act in ſubſerviency to God's predeſtinating will

[g] *Mic.* v. 2. ומוצאתיו מקדם מימי עולם, are words ſufficiently eſtabliſhing as well the human nativity, as the eternal generation of Chriſt. קדם frequently ſignifies proper eternity. Thus *Dent.* xxxiii. 27. God is called אלהי קדם. In *Pſalm* lv. 20. he is ſaid וישב קדם. In *Habak.* i. 12. the Prophet aſks, הלוא אתה מקדם. So that whilſt *the coming forth of this Ruler out of Bethlehem* points out particularly the reality of his humanity; his *goings forth being of old from everlaſting*, do as diſtinctly denote his eternal generation and ſonſhip by the promiſe of God, before ever the heavens and the earth were made.

[h] *Acts* ii. 23. [i] *Luke* ii. 4. [k] *Luke* ii. 6.

and

and commands, and execute his decrees. Such uſe doth he make of men as his agents, without their having any ſuſpicions of it. Thus whilſt the emperor of Rome pleaſed himſelf in carrying on his own ſchemes of worldly power and policy, he was effectually confirming the truth of ancient Prophecies, and demonſtrating the ſubjection of the Jews to his dominion: And his own Regiſters, thoſe public Records of the State, became ſo many convincing evidences of the notoriety of the fact, that Jeſus was born in the place which was marked out by the Prophets, and is called in the text *the city of David*[1].

[1] Many are the appeals which the apologiſts and other ancient writers, in the earlier days of Chriſtianity made to theſe publick Regiſters. Juſtin Martyr, who lived about the middle of the ſecond century, in his dialogue with Trypho, mentions this taxation of Auguſtus; but in his firſt apology, he particularly refers to the cenſual tables to prove that Chriſt was born at Bethlehem, and was of the family of David. Ως και μαθειν δυνασθε εκ των απογραφων των γενομενων επι Κυρηνιου του υμετερου εν Ιουδαια πρωτου γενομενης επιτροπης. Apol. 1. ad Antonin. Pium. S. 44.

Tertullian, at the expiration of the ſame century, in ſeveral of his works, refers to the ſame Records as the moſt indiſputable authority: More particularly, in his fourth book againſt Marcion he repeatedly appeals to them, as to the beſt vouchers for the truth of this matter. In his ſeventh chapter he ſays, De cenſu Auguſti, quem teſtem fideliſſimum dominicæ nativitatis Romana archiva cuſtodiunt. In his nineteenth chapter

From the time and place of Chriſt's nativity proceed we to conſider,

3. The dignity and excellency of his perſon, as pronounced by the Angel to be *a Saviour, Chriſt the Lord.*

He ſhall be the Mediator of a new and better covenant between God and man, He ſhall ſave his people from their ſins, is the conſtant voice of Scripture and Prophecy from the Fall to the Redemption. By deriving our being from the loins of a tranſgreſſing progenitor, we are born under the controuling influence of his fallen and

chapter he refers to them for further information--apud quos (cenſus ſcilicet actos ſub Auguſto) genus ejus inquirere potuiſſent. In his thirty-ſixth chapter he thus expreſſes himſelf. Tam diſtincta fuit a primordio Judæa gens, per tribus et populos et familias et domos, ut nemo facile ignorari de genere potuiſſet, vel de recentibus Auguſtianis cenſibus adhuc tunc fortaſſe pendentibus . . . . Qui vult videre Jeſum, David filium credat per Virginis cenſum. Long after theſe, Chryſoſtom, who flouriſhed at the cloſe of the fourth century, in one of his Sermons or Homilies upon Chriſtmas-Day, appeals to thoſe very Regiſters as ſtill extant in his time, in the following words. Και τοις αρχαιοις τοις δημοσιοις κειμενοις Κωδιξιν επι της Ρωμης εξεσιν εντυχοντα, και τ καιρον τ απογραφης μαθοντα ακριβως ειδεναι τ βελομενον. κ. τ. λ. Homil. in Chriſti Natal. Tom. 5. p. 512, 513. Ed Sav.

corrupted

corrupted nature, ſubject to the ſentence and condemnation awaiting ſin unpardoned, and totally unable of ourſelves to make any equivalent ſatisfaction. What we could not do for ourſelves, Chriſt did for us. He became man, that as man he might *fulfil all Righteouſneſs*[m]. "Taking to himſelf our fleſh, and by his incarnation making it his own fleſh, he had now of his own, although from us, what to offer unto God for us. And as Chriſt took manhood, that by it he might be capable of death whereunto he humbled himſelf; ſo becauſe manhood is the proper ſubject of compaſſion and feeling pity, which maketh the ſceptre of his regency even in the kingdom of heaven amiable, he which, without our nature could not on earth ſuffer for the ſins of the world, doth now alſo by means thereof both make interceſſion to God for ſinners[n], and exerciſe dominion over all men with a true, a natural, and a ſenſible touch of mercy[o]." So greatly *hath God commended his love towards us, in that*

[m] *Matt.* iii. 15. [n] *Heb* iv. 15.
[o] Hooker's Eccleſiaſtical Polity, B. v. S. 51.

while

while we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for us[p], and paid the price of our Redemption; that thus being delivered from the common dangers of perſonal and original evil, we might become members of that myſtical body whereof he is head, and thereby be entitled to that eternal glory and happineſs which he hath purchaſed for us. For *him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance and forgiveneſs of ſins*[q], *and power to become the Sons of God, even to them that ſhall believe in his name*[r]. Indeed, the very name Jeſus[s] indicates

[p] *Rom.* v. 8. [q] *Acts* v. 31. [r] *John* i. 12.

[s] *Jeſus*, or God the Saviour. *In nomine Jeſu* (ſays the pious John Arndt) *totum Evangelium comprehenditur.* A name the ſame as, and derived from the Hebrew יהושע: A word compounded of יה the common contraction of יהוה, which denotes a being neceſſarily exiſting, and which hath being in and from himſelf; and חושע, which ſignifies a ſaviour or Deliverer, without defining or determining his nature; יה therefore directly points out the abſolute inherent divinity of JESUS, who, as the true יהושע could perfect and compleat that character typified in the Old Teſtament by that חושע, whoſe name was changed by divine deſignation into this diſtinguiſhed appellation יהושע. v. Num. xiii. 16. *Nulla ſcripturæ differentia diſtinguens hoc Chriſti proprium nomen ab ejus nomine qui Moſi ſuccedens populumque ducens in terras promiſſas Chriſtum, æternæ quietis datorem, non tantum nominis ſono ſed et rebus geſtis adumbravit. ut videre eſt,* Act. vii. 45. *et* Heb. iv. 8. v. Grotii Annot. in Matt. i. 21.

a Sa-

a Saviour[t], the divinity of whose power *can save us with an everlasting Salvation*[u].

2. But this *Jesus* the *Saviour* is here called *Christ*, or, which is the same word, *Messiah*, to denote his appointment or consecration by unction, to that high office which he had undertaken to execute. This was the usual initiatory ceremony which distinguished the prophetical, the sacerdotal, and the regal character[w]. Thus the Prophets, when entrusted with any commission of singular importance, were anointed with *oil poured upon them*[x]. Thus, was the high priest consecrated to his sacred function *by holy anointing oil*[y]. Thus also were their kings inaugurated into their exalted office[z]. Other nations have, in like manner, adopted this religious ceremony, and from hence have kings themselves been dignified with the honourable

[t] *Matt.* i. 21. [u] *Is.* xlv. 17.

[w] Sometimes indeed persons are spoken of as delegated to these offices, without the ceremony of any external anointing, yet are said to be anointed to such offices. See Archbishop Secker's Lectures on the Catechism. Lecture VII.

[x] 1 *Kings* xix. 16. [y] *Exod.* xxix. 7.

[z] 1 *Kings* xix. 15, 16. 2 *Kings* ix. 6.

appella-

appellation of the Lord's anointed. Thus was the Saviour of mankind ſet apart and conſecrated to his ſeveral offices of Prophet, Prieſt, and King. He was that *Prophet like unto Moſes, to whom all men were required to hearken*[a]. *He was a Prieſt for ever after the order of Melchiſedek*[b]. He was *that King whom God* of old *promiſed to ſet upon his holy hill of Sion*[c]. As *the tabernacle, the ark, the altars,* and all things pertaining to them were ſanctified by the effuſion *of oil, and made moſt holy,* and as *whatſoever touched them was holy*[d]: So did the ſpirit of *Jehovah,* when *Jeſus* aſſumed humanity and became inveſted with his mediatorial office, fill him with gifts and graces of the *Spirit without meaſure*[e] or limitation: ſo that *from the anointing which we receive of him*[f], *from* the overflowing *fulneſs* of his eſſential divinity, *do we* his people *receive grace for,* or upon *grace*[g]; deriving from him that illumination and *unction which teacheth us all things*[h], which ſanctifieth us wholly, and by that means

[a] *Deut.* xviii. 18, 19. [b] *Heb.* v. 6. [c] *Pſal.* ii. 6. [d] *Exod.* xxx. 26—29. [e] *John* iii. 34. [f] 1 *John* ii. 27. [g] *John* i. 16.

maketh or conſecrateth *us to be Kings and Prieſts unto God and his Father* [i].

3. To theſe two appellations of a *Saviour*, and of *Chriſt*, is added a third of ſimilar, if not ſuperior magnitude, the title of *Lord*, to denote his power and ſovereignty over all things. This is the peculiar ſtyle of our maſter in the Scriptures, *the Lord* or *our Lord*. Thoſe rapturous words of the Pſalmiſt, which are ſpoken by way of apoſtrophe to the Son, *thy throne O God is for ever and ever* [k], are produced by the argumentative writer of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews [l], as wholly applicatory to him, and to contain a clear and full deſcription of him, his ſtate, and his mediatorial kingdom. *Thou haſt crowned him with glory and honour, and haſt put all things in ſubjection under his feet*, is the prophetick teſtimony of the ſame devout writer to Meſſiah's future grandeur, and is applied by the ſame inſpired interpreter [m], to the perſon of Chriſt, as denoting the extent, ſtability, and perpetuity of his dominion.

[i] *Rev.* i. 6. [k] *Pſal.* xlv. 6. [l] *Heb.* i. 8.
[m] *Heb.* ii. 7. citing *Pſal.* viii. 5, 6.

Such

Such and ſo great is the ſupremacy of his power and authority, that it cannot be ſubverted, or himſelf removed from his throne by any, or by all his enemies; unlimited power in heaven and earth being given unto him. Moreover we are his ſubjects, his ſervants, and his creatures by every right and claim: And he is declared our Lord, our Maſter, and our God by every ſtyle and title, whether of inheritance, or purchaſe, or election, or conqueſt.

All this is ſignified under the denomination applied by the Angel to the holy child Jeſus, when he was proclaimed to men as their great and adorable *Lord*. An appellation invariably beſtowed upon Chriſt by all the ſacred penmen of Scripture, whenever there is occaſion to name either his perſon or his office: as if the ſpirit of Prophecy foreſeeing the violent oppoſition which would ariſe in later times againſt the eternal exiſtence, the inherent divinity of the Son of God, was peculiarly anxious to remove every objection, that human wiſdom, or rather human weakneſs

might presumptuously urge against it: for surely pure and absolute Deity cannot be spoken of in terms of any other signification, or in words of sublimer and more mysterious import, than what are ascribed to *Jesus* when declared to be, by the attestation of such competent witnesses, *a Saviour, Christ the Lord.*

This also is the testimony he gave of himself and of his own original powers, when he severally affirmed, that he *came forth from God*[n]; that he *was his Son*[o]; that *what things soever the father doth, these also doth the Son likewise*[p], from the unity of their essence, and their omnipotence: So that *they who had seen him, had seen the Father also*[q]; as he was *the express image*, the visible representation or resemblance *of his Person*[r], and to whom was joined the spiritual, invisible, divine Nature of the most high God; for he was truly and literally God incarnate, God and man. In his converse with men, he divested himself of his greatness, *and took upon him the form of a*

[n] *John* xvi. 28. [o] *John* iii. 16. [p] *John* v. 19.
[q] *John* xiv. 9. [r] *Heb.* i. 3.

servant;

ſervant[s]: But notwithſtanding this external humiliation and abaſement, he could not relinquiſh his real nature, his peculiar dignity; for he was, and could be no other than the Son of God, though *made in the likeneſs of men, and found in faſhion as a man*[t]; and therefore *he thought*, or counted *it no robbery*, or uſurpation of a prerogative which did not properly belong to him, *to be equal with God*[u], or to aſſume thoſe incommunicable names, titles, and attributes, by which the Almighty hath made himſelf known; and to require from men the homage and adoration due to that ſupreme Being.

To theſe diſtinguiſhed glories of their Maſter, his Apoſtles with grateful joy bear their concurrent evidence. They aſſure us, that after Chriſt had offered up himſelf to God, as the meritorious and propitiatory ſacrifice for ſin, *he entered into heaven itſelf, now to appear in the preſence of God for us*[w], as our all-ſufficient and prevailing Advocate and Interceſſor. There they re-

[s] *Phil.* ii. 7, 8. [u] *Phil.* ii. 6.
[w] *Heb.* ix. 24.

preſent him placed at the throne of God, not like a petitioner ſtanding in a poſture of humble reverence before it, but as partaker of coeſſential and coeternal glory with the Father, ſitting down upon it *on the right hand of the* glorious *majeſty* of God [x], or, as the ſame inſpired writer afterwards expreſſes it, *on the right hand of the throne of the Majeſty in the heavens* [y]. In this place, which is the more peculiar reſidence and manifeſtation of the preſence of God, is Chriſt deſcribed as inveſted with an amazing plenitude of power; and all the celeſtial inhabitants which are round about the throne of God are ſpoken of as falling down and worſhipping him that ſitteth upon it; and *calling upon every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth,* and upon univerſal nature, to add their joyful acclamations in concert with the whole choir of Angels and of Saints *to him that ſitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever* [z]; even to that myſtical *Son of man, who is the firſt and the laſt; he that liveth and was dead: and is alive for evermore* [a]: *he who was declared*

[x] *Heb.* i. 3. [y] *Heb.* viii. 1. [z] *Rev.* v. 13.
[a] *Rev.* i. 17, 18.

to

to be the Son of God with power [b]; and tho' ſlain and *crucified* by *enemies (who would not that he ſhould reign over them* [c]*)* yet *hath God made him both Lord and Chriſt* [d].

From theſe conſiderations, from the intrinſick greatneſs of Meſſiah's perſon, gifts, and graces, we are called upon by every tye of reaſon and of duty, of gratitude and of affection, to rejoice and bleſs God for the miraculous incarnation of his Son. If holy men of old, if patriarchs and prophets *ſaw this day* at a diſtance *and were glad* [e]; if they who had only an obſcure viſion, a faint repreſentation *of the glory which was to follow* [f], could *rejoice with joy unſpeakable* [g], how much exceeding theirs muſt our tranſports be for the full manifeſtation and accompliſhment of thoſe promiſed mercies. Bleſſed are *our eyes for they ſee, and our ears for they hear the things which Kings, and Prophets*, and wiſe Men *deſired to ſee and hear* [h], without the happineſs of having their wiſhes compleated; *God having provided better things*

[b] *Rom.* i. 4.
[c] *Luke* xix. 27.
[d] *Acts* ii. 36.
[e] *John* viii. 56.
[f] 1 *Pet.* i. 11.
[g] 1 *Pet.* i. 8.
[h] *Luke* x. 24.

for us, under the Gospel covenant; and hence having determined, *that they without us should not be made perfect*[i]; but that he would finally *bring* all his *sons unto glory*[k], even unto the full consummation of their hopes through *Christ*, their *Saviour* and their *Lord*.

By this Revelation of divine Philanthropy did God make known all the mysterious secrets of his Providence, all the momentous articles of grace and truth, of light and life, and so make them known, *that all the ends of the earth have seen*, and may become partakers of *the salvation of God*[l]. If therefore deliverance from all evil, spiritual and temporal; if the announcing of peace, pardon, and reconciliation between God and man be tidings of joy and comfort; if the promises of good and happiness infinite and eternal be desireable and delightful, then should his name who secured all these inestimable blessings be for ever dear and precious to us. With the utmost rapture and thankfulness should we

[i] *Heb.* xi. 40. [k] *Heb.* ii. 10.
[l] *Psal.* xcviii. 3.

praise

praiſe and magnify him as the ſource and fountain of all good here, and of all hope hereafter. For in him *mercy and truth have met together*[m]; heaven and earth, God and man were united to bleſs and to ſave us.

This is the true foundation of devotion, praiſe, and love. This will teach us with equal extaſy to repeat the Hoſannahs of the Angels, and to ſing *glory to God in the higheſt, and on earth peace, good will towards men*[n]. With the heavenly Hoſt we ſhall chant our grateful Hallelujahs, *for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*[o]. We ſhall with exulting hearts give our tribute of joy, honour, and adoration, becauſe *the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Chriſt, and he ſhall reign for ever and ever*[p]: *having redeemed unto God by his blood* the ſons of men *out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*[q]. Theſe are the wonders which *Jeſus* hath done for us, who was a *Saviour*, even *Chriſt the Lord.*

[m] *Pſal.* lxxxv. 10. [n] *Luke* ii. 10. [o] *Rev.* xix. 6.
[p] *Rev.* xi. 15. [q] *Rev.* v. 9.

SERMON VI.

JOHN v. 23. latter part.

——He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath ſent him.

IT is obvious to remark that the Goſpel of St. John is diſtinguiſhed by a peculiar ſimplicity of ſtyle, by a conciſe and definite form of expreſſion, and by a familiar diction of the utmoſt plainneſs in its grammatical conſtruction: Nevertheleſs it muſt be acknowledged, that many of the doctrines and propoſitions therein delivered are difficult to be comprehended by the human

human mind, and more difficult to be interpreted and explained by mere human abilities. The reaſon of this difficulty is alſo plain and obvious; ſince however ſimple and eaſy may be the general ſtyle, yet the words are often metaphorical and figurative: And we need not wonder, that the Evangeliſt ſhould adopt this method, and ſo far condeſcend to human infirmity, when he is delivering the ſublimeſt truths, and declaring the ineffable myſtery and œconomy of the divine wiſdom in the wonderful work of man's redemption. The other Evangeliſts, for the moſt part, contented themſelves with delivering the hiſtorical narration of what Chriſt did and ſuffered, or thoſe things which chiefly aſcertained the reality of his human nature: But St. John who probably ſurvived all the other Diſciples of the Bleſſed Jeſus, and lived long enough to ſee hereſies and falſe doctrines creeping into the Church, and threatening the peace of it, formed his Goſpel upon a different plan. In the very introduction of it, he aſſerts in the moſt abſolute and unlimited terms the divinity and eternal pre-exiſtence of the *Word* or *Logos*,

Logos, which word was our *Jeſus*; and that all the ſeveral intereſting characters of *light*, *life*, *truth*, *grace*, and *glory*, did moſt eminently center in, and marked the perſon of the *word made fleſh*[a]: His incarnation alſo is related in words of ſingular import and enforcement, more fully to inform us of the gracious purpoſes for which the Deity was pleaſed to aſſume in a viſible bodily ſhape our human nature.

After this ſolemn and emphatical declaration of the original glory and dignity of the *word*; to evidence his own convictions, and to keep up the impreſſions they would naturally excite, the Apoſtle, in the courſe of his hiſtory, takes peculiar pleaſure in the recital of thoſe remarkable occurrences of Chriſt's life and miniſtry, which more immediately tended to magnify his inherent grace and power, which openly manifeſted him to be, in a very ſignificant and appropriate ſenſe of the words, *the Son of God*, *God* himſelf incarnate, *dwelling* or pitching his tabernacle *amongſt us*, and exhibiting the laſt

[a] *John* i. 14.

and

and moſt glorious appearance of his Shechinah upon earth. Not that there are wanting in the other ſacred hiſtorians ſufficient and ample proofs to eſtabliſh this leading and fundamental article of our faith. They did not however ſo profeſſedly enter into the diſcuſſion of it; but as occaſion might ſometimes incidentally lead them, they confirm it, by uſing ſuch expreſſions, which, compared with other Scriptures, cannot conſiſtently be otherwiſe interpreted: for they ſeem to take it for granted that it never could be called in queſtion; and was naturally deducible from the conſideration of thoſe miracles which Jeſus did, and from the view of thoſe Prophecies they pointed out, as indiſputably fulfilled in him.

But alas! no ſooner did Chriſtianity gain ground, than terms of art and doctrines of human philoſophy began to be mixed with it; and errors concerning the perſon, nature, and offices of Chriſt, were induſtriouſly ſpread and eagerly embraced. To obviate theſe alarming miſchiefs, our Evangeliſt, who was honoured with the moſt intimate

intimate confidence of Chriſt whilſt upon earth, was preſent at every memorable tranſaction, and was a frequent witneſs of his divine glory, was beſt qualified to give the moſt ſatisfactory account of his antecedent glory and greatneſs, and to expoſe the error and malignity of thoſe perverters of the Faith, who aſſerted that he was but a mere man. This, which he was beſt able to do, he hath done in his Goſpel: In the very beginning whereof he diſcovers his oppoſition to the riſing Hereſies of that age, by advancing ſuch poſitions as irrefragable maxims, which are in the fulleſt repugnancy to the principles maintained by the abettors of them; and which it is his direct purpoſe throughout the whole to demonſtrate to be falſe.

In the progreſs of his hiſtory, in the farther narration of thoſe amazing operations which ſufficiently vindicated the divine authority of the bleſſed Jeſus, and evidenced *his glory* to be *the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*[b], he produces a great

[b] *John* i. 14.

variety

variety of proofs to illuſtrate his grand object, that *Jeſus was the Son of God.* In the chapter from whence the words of the text are taken, we are informed that our bleſſed Lord having miraculouſly healed *an impotent man on the ſabbath day*, juſtified the propriety of this action from the objection of its being a profanation of that holy day, by aſſerting his unity and equality in nature and operation with his Father: *My Father*, ſays he, *worketh hitherto, and I work* [c]; not as an inferior ſubordinate inſtrument, but as a principal efficient, jointly working together with him. He aſſumed no improper claim in thus calling God, παρ' ἴδιον, not in a figurative, but an appropriate ſenſe, his own peculiar Father. As his Son he was *Lord alſo of the Sabbath* [d], and to be looked upon in that ſuperior light. That the Jews, who were preſent at this miracle, might by it be convinced of his divinity, he repreſented to them in the moſt unequivocal terms his abſolute equality with the Father, from the following conſiderations, becauſe both are equal

[c] *John* v. 17.
[d] *Mark* ii. 28.

in

in operation, will, and consent; for *what things soever the Father doeth, these also doth the Son likewise*[e]. From the affection which *the Father* beareth to him; for he *loveth him, and sheweth him all things that himself doth*[f]. From his omnipotency, in raising the dead by the same essential authority and freedom of will; *for as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them: even so the Son quickeneth whom he will*[g]. From his power of judging the world, which *the Father hath committed unto the* Son[h]; and from his partaking of the same original principle of life with the Father; *for as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself*[i], in the same independent and equal degree. To these arguments in proof of his unity of essence, and equality in power, glory, and dignity with the Father, he addeth, as competent witnesses to corroborate them, the several testimonies of *John the Baptist*[k], of *his own works*[l], of *the Father which had sent him*[m], and *of the Scriptures*[n].

[e] *John* v. 19. [f] *John* v. 20. [g] *John* v. 21.
[h] *John* v. 22. [i] *John* v. 26. [k] *John* v. 33.
[l] *John* v. 36. [m] *John* v. 37. [n] *John* v. 39.

Upon these authoritative credentials of his divine origin and mission, with the greatest propriety and justice might our blessed Lord say, it was incumbent upon all men, *that they should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father; for,* certainly *he who honoureth not the Son,* invested with such exalted powers, *honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.*

In the farther consideration of these words we will enquire,

First, Who may be reckoned to honour not the Son.

Secondly, Why such, in reality, honour not the Father.

The more exalted and the more glorious the worth and dignity of the Redeemer's person and character are, the more, surely, hath *God commended his love towards us*[o]. Not thankfully to accept his gracious over-

[o] *Rom.* v. 8.

tures

tures thus recommended, muſt argue a low eſteem of Chriſt, and all the precious promiſes of God in him. We need not however go beyond the pale of the Chriſtian Church to find out thoſe who honour not the Son of God. They who live in open violation of his moral laws, do practically diſhonour him, are a reproach to his Goſpel, and to that ſacred name of his whereby they are called. Others may alſo effectually diſhonour the Son of God, who ſhall neglect or ſlight any of his poſitive inſtitutions, deeming the obſervation of them a needleſs act of duty, and that it is a matter of mere indifference whether they are adminiſtred or not. Surely they who thus think and act with regard to ſuch ſolemn indiſpenſable ordinances, and preſume to treat them either with ludicrous mirth, or to explode them with pretended argument, may not unjuſtly be reputed to entertain in reality the ſame low opinion of him, who appointed theſe as the diſtinguiſhing ceremonies of his Religion, as they profeſs to have for the obligation of the rites themſelves.

We may delude ourſelves with vain imaginations; we may amuſe ourſelves in forming many plauſible and ingenious ſchemes of Salvation; yet none will approve itſelf ſo certain in its principles, ſo rational in its inſtitutions, ſo eaſy in its practice, ſo forcible in its motives, and ſo conducive to virtue and happineſs, as the full ſcheme of Redemption exhibited in Scripture. Yet how frequently have weak and raſh mortals taken upon them to correct and improve this gracious diſpenſation, by cutting off what they fancy to be ſuperfluous, or by adding what they judge ſtill wanting to its compleat perfection; artfully endeavouring to obtrude into the world, not ſo much the pure, plain, and unadulterated Religion of Chriſt, as that modification of it which they have adventured to ſuit to their various refinements. Thus whilſt ſome have ſo myſtically ſpiritualized the Goſpel, as almoſt, if not entirely, to diveſt it of external inſtitutions, and to leave no apparent ſigns, no diſtinguiſhing marks of a Church or religious Service: Others, in the contrary extreme,

have

have ſo loaded it with numberleſs ceremonies and ſuperſtitious fopperies, as to make it conſiſt of little more than a conſtant round of outward ſhew and form, a tireſome repetition of uſeleſs and unedifying rites. Both parties at the ſame time ſtyling themſelves Diſciples and followers of the bleſſed Jeſus; both equally diſhonouring him and his holy Religion; both making the inventions of men, not the word of God, the controulers or diſcriminative characteriſticks of the laws and precepts of Chriſt.

But moreover, and principally, Chriſt may be diſhonoured if his divinity be denied. This ſort of diſhonour is what we may preſume the Apoſtle chiefly aimed at in the text; and is in effect to reduce him to the level of created beings, and to diveſt him of that eternal *glory, which he had with the Father before the world was*[p]. For he either is, or is not God. If he be God, to call in queſtion his divine inherent excellencies, and to refuſe him the honour

[p] *John* xvii. 5.

due unto him, will, in its conſequences at leaſt, fall little ſhort of Atheiſm itſelf. If he be not entitled to that divine character, it will be an equal offence againſt God to aſcribe thoſe perfections to Chriſt, which do not in reality belong to him. But can we allow ourſelves to ſuppoſe that the Saviour of mankind, who came into the world as well to promote the honour of God, as the happineſs of men, would upon any account, and without any reſervation, have *made himſelf equal with God*[q], and pronounced *that he and his Father are one*[r]; if he was abſolutely nothing more than a finite creature exiſting in time, and had no ſuch equality with the Father, and no communication or participation of the Deity with him? Or would he, in juſtification of ſuch myſterious language, have ventured to reprove the Jews for their religious indignation againſt him, becauſe he plainly claimed ſupreme eſſential Divinity as his juſt prerogative, by this remarkable vindication of his aſſertions; Shall *ye* preſume to *ſay of him whom the Father hath ſanctified*, or ſo-

[q] *John* v. 18.
[r] *John* x. 30. and xvii. 11, 22.

lemnly

lemnly conſecrated *and ſent into the world* in ſuch an exalted light, *thou blaſphemeſt, becauſe I ſaid, I am the Son of God*[s]? Behold, *I do the* miraculous *works of my Father*[t], which clearly demonſtrate a divine agency; *that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him*[u], by ſuch an intimate indiſſoluble union, as will fully warrant the ſtrongeſt deductions you can draw in proof of my divinity from ſuch high, uncommon, and myſterious expreſſions.

The ancient Scriptures repreſent the Almighty as jealous of his honour: *my glory*, ſays the Lord by the Prophet Iſaiah, *will I not give to another*[w]; to another, or to a ſtrange God, or to any being who hath not the name and nature of the Deity. To theſe Scriptures did Chriſt appeal in his behalf: The conſtant mode or tenor of his ſpeeches was ſuch as no ſubordinate being would dare to uſe. The Jews well knew that *Son of God* and *Meſſiah* were convertible terms, ſignifying one and the ſame perſon.

[s] *John* x. 36. [t] *John* x. 37. [u] *John* x. 38.
[w] *If.* xlii. 8. xlviii. 11.

This honour he claimed: and he who could affirm that *all things were delivered unto him of his Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, ſave the Son*[x]; had a right to require that they who *believe in God, ſhould believe alſo in him*[y]. If they doubted of his words, they could not however doubt or deny his works, thoſe infallible proofs of his divinity; for *they* who heard and ſaw them *were amazed at the mighty power of God*[z]; well knowing that *no man could do thoſe miracles which he did, except God was with him*[a]. With ſuch ſignal tokens of divine favour and approbation, if Chriſt was not what he ſo ſolemnly declared he was, we muſt ſuppoſe, what we muſt almoſt tremble to mention, that God ſuffered his name and authority to be uſurped by, and to vouch for an impoſtor. In the plaineſt conſtruction of the words, this would be to rob God of that ſupreme honour which is due ſolely unto him, and to lead men into the groſſeſt errors in the very eſſentials of Religion, nay, into idolatry itſelf; and

[x] *Matt.* xi. 27. [y] *John* xiv. 1. [z] *Luke* ix. 43.
[a] *John* iii. 2.

that

that even by him, *who*, when arraigned *before Pontius Pilate* the Roman governor for assuming the highest honours and titles, *witnessed this good confession* [b], that he *came into the world, that he should bear witness unto the truth* [c].

But *God manifested in the flesh* [d] hath ever been *a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence* [e] to the wise men of the world. Not that, though owned to be an inexplicable mystery, they can prove it to imply any contradiction in terms, or any absurdity in the supposition. Such abstruse speculations, from the very weakness and imperfection of our faculties, must necessarily be involved in some degree of obscurity, and be viewed, as distant objects are, by reflection, *through a glass, darkly* [f]. We know no more how matter and spirit act upon each other, than we know the mystery of the Deity: but that they do, is certain; that the soul actuates the body, we feel and ex-

[b] 1 *Tim.* vi. 13. [c] *John* xviii. 37. [d] 1 *Tim.* iii. 16. [e] 1 *Pet.* ii. 8.

[f] 1 *Cor.* xiii. 12. Εν αινιγματι per ænigma, i. e. orationem obscuram, cujus verba quidem audiuntur, sensus autem non percipitur. Stockius.

perience;

perience; and that, from the impulſe of outward objects, it receives numberleſs ideas: but in what manner, is a myſtery in nature, and as much above the reach of our underſtanding, as any thing which the Scriptures aſſert of the being and nature of God. That there is ſuch an all-wiſe, and almighty, and all-perfect being, is unqueſtionable; but it is beyond the bounded capacities of the human mind, to form an adequate idea of the nature of his eſſence, or the mode of his exiſtence.

When therefore we find the higheſt names and titles, and all the known incommunicable properties and attributes of the Deity aſcribed to Chriſt by the inſpired Writers of the Scriptures; may we not reaſonably infer, that Jeſus, whoſe Diſciples we are and whoſe Religion we profeſs, is that very God whoſe works we admire, and whoſe majeſty we adore? In thoſe divine oracles of grace, and wiſdom, and truth, there are ſo many paſſages, which either poſitively affirm, plainly inculcate, or tacitly imply, that Chriſt is the very and eternal

eternal God; *the first and the last*[g]; from everlasting to everlasting: *He which is, and which was, and which is to come*[h]; *the almighty*; *the same, yesterday, to day, and for ever*[i]; that it must require great chicanery, and great sophistry, to controvert and explain away such forcible evidences. Indeed from the variety of subterfuges, and withal from the frequent concessions of some of the greatest opposers of this Doctrine, who scruple not occasionally to acknowledge, that there never was a time when the Son did not necessarily exist; we may form some judgement of their embarrassment, and of the violence they must have done to their religious principles, before they could prevail upon themselves totally to reject the ancient uniform interpretation of every Church professing Christianity, from the apostolical age to the present days[k].

[g] *Revs* i. 17. [h] *Rev.* i. 4. 8. and iv. 8.
[i] *Heb.* xiii. 8.
[k] Mr. Whiston himself could once say, though he afterwards became a professed Unitarian; "I believe and am obliged so "to do, that our Saviour Christ is truly Θεανθρωπος, God and "man; because I find it every where plain and evident, that "the style, titles, attributes, actions, and incommunicable "names of the eternal Deity, the God of Israel, are at least as "frequently ascribed to him the Son, as to the Father himself, "throughout

Such diſputers may perhaps deem themſelves powerful pleaders in behalf of what they term Reaſon and Common Senſe, whilſt they tauntingly pronounce that "Ignorance and Superſtition may think to "ſcreen themſelves behind the veil of "myſtery . . . . but a ſmall degree of ra-"tional reflection will convince us, that "Revelation and Myſtery are in their very "natures as diametrically oppoſite to each "other as Chriſt and Antichriſt, Light "and Darkneſs[l]." Such is the boaſted Chriſtianity of one who profeſſes himſelf a ſincere Diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt. *Nay but, O man, who art thou that replieſt againſt God*[m]*?* Shall the perſon ſaved ſay, why haſt thou ſaved me thus? Shall we not be content to be ſaved, unleſs we perfectly ap-

"throughout the whole Bible; notwithſtanding any inability "of comprehending the nature of God, and thence of judging "of the unity or plurality of Perſons in the Divine Eſſence."
Whiſton's Theory of the Earth, p. 42.

[l] The Doctrines of a Trinity and the Incarnation of God examined upon the Principles of Reaſon and Common Senſe. By a Member of the Church of England from birth and education, and a ſincere Diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt from choice and rational conviction. Octavo, 1772, Chap. i. Section i. p. 78, 79.

[m] *Rom.* ix. 20.

prehend

prehend the whole progreſs of the Divine Diſpenſations reſpecting our Redemption; and, unleſs the nature and wiſdom of God be accommodated to our own fond reaſonings, and the ſhallowneſs of our own underſtandings? Why then are doctrines of Faith made neceſſary conditions of Salvation? Or ſhall we doubt and reject the truth and wiſdom of God's Diſpenſations, becauſe his love is greater than our conceptions; although we are expreſsly told it is ſo in his word [n]? The unbelieving Jews, who were as unwilling as any modern objectors, to allow the truth of what they could not comprehend, or to acknowledge the divinity of the perſon, and the excellency of the powers of Chriſt, whom they ſaw *made in the likeneſs of men* [o], were aſſured by him; with a ſolemn aſſeveration, (which enhanced their guilt in rejecting him,) that *before Abraham was, I am* [p]. The meaning of theſe words they could not miſunderſtand. "It is the very ſame expreſſion, which "is uſed to expreſs the eternity, and neceſ-"ſary exiſtence of the ſupreme God [q]."

[n] *Rom.* xi. 33. [o] *Phil.* ii. 7. [p] *John* viii. 58.
[q] Dr. Randolph's Vindicat. of the Trinity, Part II. p. 7.

If

If the devout followers of Chriſt, in obedience to his commands, are deſirous *to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*; and who, that they may retain the utmoſt reverence and awe for the perſon of their Redeemer, ſhall piouſly confeſs that he was as truly the Son of God before all time, as the Son of Man in time; will it convince them of the "folly, the unreaſonableneſs, "the abſurdity, or the nonſenſe of ſuch be-"lief," to be harſhly told, that the "eſta-"bliſhing the Doctrine of the Incarnation of "of God, effectually eſtabliſhed Idolatry in "the Chriſtian Church[r]; and that the Doc-"trine of the inſeparable Union of the two "natures in Chriſt, the blending together in "one compound or monſtrous being, the di-"vine and the human nature; is not only "an abſurd fiction, but an impious, and "even blaſphemous doctrine[s]?" But is this the way to promote the glory of God, or the credit and advancement of Chriſtianity, by undervaluing and ſpeaking lightly of the honour of its bleſſed Founder? If the Laws

[r] The Doctrines of a Trinity, &c. p. 140. note.
[s] P. 105, 106, and 169.

and

and Inſtitutions of Chriſt have too little influence over thoſe who chearfully look up to him, as the prevailing *advocate with the Father*[t]; as *his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleaſed*[u]; *and whom he will always hear*[w]: Certainly they will have much leſs weight with thoſe who are taught, and are accuſtomed to conſider him in the diminiſhing light of an inferior, ſubordinate, dependent creature; and at beſt only a mere human teacher of righteouſneſs[x].

[t] 1 *John* ii. 1. [u] *Matt.* iii. 17. [w] *John* xi. 42.

[x] The warm and eager advocate for the Unitarian Syſtem above alluded to, is ſo vehement a contender for the ſupreme prerogatives of human reaſon and underſtanding, that he ſcruples not to aver, "that if they be not the rule of our reli-"gious Faith, it muſt be human folly and ſuperſtition:" (Chap. i. Sect. i. p. 78.) oſtentatiouſly magnifying the "im-"portant ſervices which would be done to the great intereſts "of virtue and uncorrupt Chriſtianity, by him who, with an "honeſt freedom, would expoſe the obvious folly and bane-"ful ſuperſtition of ſome of the preſent *orthodox* and legally "eſtabliſhed Doctrines of our Church." (Prefatory Addreſs, p. 10, 11.) To promote this good deſign, this writer throughout his book, in very exceptionable language, repeatedly accuſes "our Religion of Idolatry and falſhood, begot by the ſu-"perſtitious converts from the Greek academy, upon a few "figurative expreſſions of the ſacred writings." (Pref. p. 43. Nay further, in another place he ſays, "I am bold to "repeat, that, notwithſtanding the verbal and manual "aſſent of ſo many thouſands of all ranks and ages, which "hath been ſuppoſed to be given to it; it is impoſſible for "any man really and *ex animo* to have believed the whole "of the firſt article of the Religion of our Church, for no man "ever did, or can believe it." (Ch. i. Sect. i. p. 57. The ſame

What could animate the primitive Saints and Martyrs ſo patiently to ſuffer and ſo bravely to die, as the confidence that their Saviour was their God? It was this which afforded conſolation to the firſt bleſſed Mar-

ſame improper language is again repeated in p. 80.) "To tell "us therefore that the Father and the Son are but one and the "ſame being, or that the Son is coeval with the Father, is "to ſubvert at once every idea thoſe words are uſed to con-"vey to our minds; ſo that when we hear of a Son *of one "ſubſtance and eternity* with his Father, the ſounds indeed "are familiar; but it is as impoſſible for us to comprehend "the ſenſe, ſhould there happen to be any, as if it were a "language totally unknown to us." (P. 66, 67.) But his preſumption proceedeth to greater lengths, when he indecently pronounceth, "that every profeſſor of our holy Faith, "who worſhippeth Jeſus Chriſt as the very and eternal God, "is actually a groſs Idolater. . . . By the abſurd ſuperſtitious "Doctrine of a Trinity, and the pretended Incarnation of "the Deity, by which two different natures, by a kind of "theological chymiſtry, became amalgamated into one Chriſt, "our moſt pure and amiable Religion hath received a foul "and dreadful wound, under which ſhe hath languiſhed "above fourteen centuries, ſickly, feeble, and for the moſt "part impotent." (P. 73. note, and p. 141. note. Pretended Incarnation, Prefatory Addreſs, p. 41.) He having before obſerved, that "the ſo celebrated hypoſtatic Union, and the "conceit of God's deſcending from heaven, and taking our "nature upon him . . . . is derived from the ſource of hea-"theniſh idolatry." (P. 105.)

But accuſing and reviling will not paſs for arguing. Softer words would have been more becoming in a ſerious writer upon ſolemn and important ſubjects, and not in the leaſt have hurt his cauſe. Where able and good men are engaged in a controverſy, an humble and diffident one would carefully refrain from any expreſſions which may give diſguſt or offence: well knowing how many of equal worth and

tyr St. Stephen, under the bitter agonies of a moſt cruel death. He *ſaw the heavens*

and virtue, and full of the ſame honeſt deſires to promote the ſacred cauſe of Truth and Religion, think differently from him in theſe articles. Indeed according to ſuch principles, here is an end at once put to the neceſſity of Revelation; if reaſon, or rather private judgement, be thus made the all-ſufficient teſt of a divine Faith. If this be ſo, the leſs perfect evidence of Goſpel Light muſt give way to the clearer information of man's unerring all-comprehenſive underſtanding. But is this the truth as it is in Jeſus? *Epheſ.* iv. 21. Or rather, is it not another Goſpel? *Gal.* i. 8. For we have not ſo learned Chriſt. *Eph.* iv. 20. Can teachers of ſuch a ſpirit make us wiſer and better Chriſtians? Do they reſtrain wiſdom to themſelves? *Job* xv. 8. And are they alone beſt qualified to teach and explain the laws of their Redeemer, as being perfectly acquainted with the ſublime and heavenly Doctrines of his Revelation? Or are they ſuch eminent proficients in ſpiritual knowledge, as to be ſufficiently able to convince the world, that Articles of Faith are little better than ſo many unneceſſary impoſitions, ſo many tyrannical incroachments upon Chriſtian liberty, and ſo dreadfully offenſive to tender conſciences?

But enough has been ſaid already to confute the poſitions of theſe champions for human reaſon, though not enough to convince them of their errors. Whilſt we are in this ſtate of pilgrimage, we muſt expect to walk by faith, and not altogether by ſight. What is neceſſary for us to know is adapted to our capacities of knowledge: What is above our capacities, or, thoſe ſublimer Doctrines of the nature, grace, and deſigns of God, we muſt acquieſce in the ignorance of, and admit them, ſo far as revealed, upon the ſole credit of God's word. No demonſtration, as Mr. Chillingworth hath well obſerved, can be ſtronger than this, "God hath ſaid ſo, therefore it is "true," (Rel. Pro. Ch. vi. Sect. lvi.) So that the only queſtion in this caſe need be, whether the Scriptures teach the doctrine or not? If they do, it muſt be received, however the wit of man may labour to throw upon it the veil of inconſiſtency, or cloath it with foreign and unnatural abſurdities.

opened, and the glory of God, and Jeſus ſtanding at the right hand of God[y]; whoſe ſacred name he ardently invoked, and unto whoſe ſaving power he recommended his departing ſpirit. So triumphantly did Faith in *Jeſus*, as *the Son of God*, diſarm the rage and terror of perſecution, how ingenious ſoever in the invention, or barbarous in the execution of a vaſt variety of torments: And in a ſhort ſpace of time this well-grounded *Faith*, this *word of God ſo mightily grew and prevailed*[z] over all oppoſition, *the Lord confirming the word with ſigns following*[a], that princes themſelves became its ſteady guardians and powerful protectors.

But no ſooner was the glorified and exalted nature of the Son of Man called in queſtion, and men became eager to be *wiſe in their own conceits*[b]; than diſcord and ſhedding of blood, and every evil work brought indelible infamy upon the Chriſtian Church, though miraculouſly planted, and peaceably eſtabliſhed. Hence controverſies aroſe, which firſt corrupted the Faith, then vitiated the morals, and finally

[y] *Acts* vii. 55, 56. [z] *Acts* xix. 20. [a] *Mark* xvi. 20. [b] *Rom.* xii. 16.

deſtroyed

deſtroyed the moſt flouriſhing Churches in the world.

It was this ſpirit and love of Diſſenſion which, in the earlier ages of the Goſpel, ſo readily paved the way for Mahometaniſm in the Eaſt; and thoſe churches which were once the glory of their times, ſoon fell a prey to the rapid progreſs of an impious impoſtor. The intemperate diſcuſſion of this ſublime doctrine made a ſad breach in the unity of the Faith; and thoſe who became indifferent whether they adhered to it or not, eaſily got over their ſcruples, and heſitated not publickly *to deny the Lord who bought them* [c].

No ſooner alſo was the Proteſtant Reformation of the Church effected in later ages, but the like diſgraceful feuds commenced afreſh, and being new modelled into Socinianiſm, occaſioned equal diſturbances. The churches of Hungary, Poland, and Tranſylvania, where it chiefly prevailed [d], (as had

[c] 2 *Pet.* ii. 1.

[d] Lampe Hiſtoria Eccleſiæ Reformatæ in Hungaria et Tranſylvania; and Dr. William Berriman's Moyer's Lectures, Sermon VIII. throughout.

happened before to thoſe of the Eaſt) experienced ſimilar devaſtation and ruin, from thoſe magnifiers of human reaſon and deniers of the virtue and merits of Chriſt's ſatisfaction, the proud ſcorners of this world, who will not be perſuaded to *caſt down imaginations* or vain reaſonings, *and every high thing* or ambitious diſplay of that falſe wiſdom, *which exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of God*; not aware of the neceſſity of this humility of the mind, and how earneſtly they are admoniſhed to *bring into captivity every thought*, every preſumptuous arrogant notion, *to the obedience of Chriſt* [e]. In good truth, this prurient ſpirit of controverſy, this attempt to reduce *the deep things of God, which no man knoweth, but the ſpirit of God* [f], to the ſtandard of human judgement and apprehenſion, hath been infinitely more baneful to truth and religion, than all the malice and perſecutions of the moſt inveterate enemies to the croſs of Chriſt.

[e] 2 *Cor.* x. 5. Λογισμους καθαιρουντες Ratiocinationes evertentes, eas nimirum, quæ ſunt contra Deum et myſteria divina. Stockius.

[f] 1 *Cor.* ii. 10, 11.

Thoſe

Thoſe indeed, who thus deſpiſe or deny the Divinity of the Son, profeſs however that they are actuated by no other motive than their zeal for the honour of the one ſupreme God and Father of all; which honour, if aſcribed to the Son, is abſolutely paying him that divine worſhip, which belongs wholly and ſolely to the Father.

This brings us to conſider,

Secondly, The other clauſe of the words before us, that *they who honour not the Son, honour not the Father which hath ſent him.* The connexion and union between them is ſuch, that the honour is mutual and reciprocal; and that reaſoning which eſtabliſhes the homage due to one, confirms it alſo as due to the other. Very little therefore need be added to illuſtrate this point. By whatſoever prophet or preacher of righteouſneſs God ſpeaketh to man, he muſt be received in that light in which God ſhall reveal him: to diſparage the office or perſon

of ſuch a meſſenger, muſt be a ſlight ſhewn to him who ſent him.

If the ſpirit and voice of Inſpiration repreſent *Chriſt as the only begotten and the beloved Son of God*; *the character, the likeneſs, the image, the form, the nature, and the manifeſtation of him* from all eternity, ſo as none other ever was, or, without the imputation of blaſphemy, could be ſaid to be; then it muſt be no inconſiderable offence againſt God himſelf, ſo to debaſe the honour of his Son, as to conſider him as a finite dependent Being, of a nature different from and inferior to the Father. As a Son he is *one with his Father*[s], having the ſame common undivided nature, eſſence, properties, and attributes with him: and what greater honour can redound to him, than when the meritorious efficacy of our Redemption is conſidered to proceed from his own inherent and original grace, will, and power?

[s] *John* x. 30. xvii. 11, 22.

Nay,

Nay, it muſt be the greateſt impiety to ſuppoſe, that God would ſuffer ſuch a ſtumbling block to be laid in our way, as certainly is laid in Scripture, if Chriſt, with all theſe peculiar tokens of true and proper Divinity, be nothing more than a mere man, a created, precarious being, which he muſt be, if he be not truly God. Can we poſſibly and ſeriouſly imagine, that thoſe ſacred penmen, who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt, would deliver moſt eſſential, neceſſary, ſaving truths, in ſo vague and careleſs a manner, as almoſt naturally, from the tendency of their reaſonings, and tenor of their expreſſions, to lead us into the groſſeſt errors of Polytheiſm and Idolatry, which would be the fact, if Chriſt is not to be looked up to as God?

Let us not however have leſs reverence for Jeſus, than *Pilate* himſelf ſhewed, who, *when he heard that he had made himſelf the Son of God, was the more afraid*[h]. Let us

[h] *John* xix. 7, 8.

not join with the Jews in their clamours againſt him, *becauſe that he being* in appearance *a man, made himſelf God*[i]. Contemplating only with the eye of weak and fallible reaſon the external view of his humanity, let us not inſultingly ſay unto him, with his fellow-ſufferer the impenitent malefactor, *ſave thyſelf and us*[k]. Alas! can this man of ſorrows in his abject abaſement preſume *to think it not robbery* now, *to be equal with God*[l]; behold *he hath no form, nor comelineſs, nor beauty*, nor ſtrength, nor power, *that we ſhould deſire him*[m]? However worldly ſceptical wiſdom may judge thus, let us remember, that it was neceſſary for the Saviour of the world that he might *bring many ſons unto glory, to be made perfect through ſufferings*[n]. And that "the world's Salvation was, without the "Incarnation of the Son of God, a thing "impoſſible; not ſimply impoſſible, but "impoſſible, it being preſuppoſed that the "will of God was no otherwiſe to have "it ſaved than by the death of his own "Son[o]."

[i] *John* x. 33. [k] *Luke* xxiii. 39. [l] *Phil.* ii. 6.
[m] *Iſ.* liii. 2. [n] *Heb.* ii. 10.
[o] Hooker's Eccleſ. Pol. B. v. S. 51.

Well

Well therefore might Chriſt himſelf ſay, *bleſſed is he whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me*[p]. And what ſaith the Spirit of the Goſpel, of Faith, and of Love? This will teach us, that to acknowledge and confeſs *Jeſus to be both Lord and Chriſt*[q], to be God and Man, will inſpire us with the livelieſt ſenſe of joy, gratitude, and hope. Then ſhall we *honour the Son, even as we honour the Father: Angels, and Authorities, and Powers being made ſubject unto him*[r]. After many repeated meſſages by Prophets and holy Men of old; laſt of all *God ſent his own Son* into the world, *in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh*[s], ſaying, *they will reverence my Son*[t], the ſovereign Lord and heir of all things.

With ſuch extraordinary declarations from heaven to evince this article of our Faith, how chearfully may we truſt to the merits of Chriſt's perſon, to the efficacy of his Interceſſion, and to the

[p] *Matt.* xi. 6. and *Luke* vii. 23.
[q] *Acts* ii. 36. [r] 1 *Pet.* iii. 22. [s] *Rom.* viii. 3.
[t] *Matt.* xxi. 37.

power

power of his Grace and Salvation; when we conſider him as that great, glorious, and adorable Being, *who proceeded forth, and came from God*[u]; *who was with God, who was God*[w], and in whom *dwelt all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily*[x]: Who, by his

[u] *John* viii. 42. [w] *John* i. 1.

[x] *Col.* ii. 9. "Every word in this paſſage carries along "with it a peculiar force. For it is not ſaid, that the fulneſs "of the *Divinity* lodgeth in Chriſt, but of the *Deity*, or God-"head, the word not being θειοτητος, but θεοτητος. Nor is it "ſimply ſaid θεοτητος, but της θεοτητος, to aſſure us, that we "are to underſtand the Deity here in the higheſt ſenſe. Nor "yet is it barely ſaid, that he has πληρωμα, *a fulneſs* of the "Deity, but το πληρωμα *the fulneſs* thereof. But, as if it "were not enough to ſay *the fulneſs*, by way of eminence, "it is called παν το πληρωμα, *all the fulneſs*. Beſides, it is "not ſaid, that this all-fulneſs of the Deity *lodgeth* in Chriſt, "but the very contrary; that, κατοικει εν αυτω, *it dwelleth in* "*him*, as in its proper houſe, ſeat, or repoſitory. And all "this is ſtill more conſiderable, becauſe it is added, that the "all-fulneſs of the Deity or Godhead dwells in Chriſt σωμα-"τικως, *bodily*, or as ſome render it, ſubſtantially or really. "However the meaning is, that this all-fulneſs of the Deity "dwells in Chriſt, not as in the tabernacle and temple "of old, *emblematically* and *efficiently* only: Not under the "notion of *a general or univerſal Preſence or Providence*; "for ſo it is every where: Nor under the idea of a *ſpecial* "*efficiency of the Spirit*; for ſo God dwelleth in his Saints. "But we are to underſtand it of a real and proper inhabita-"tion, and ſuch as denotes a true perſonal union; ſuch an one as "is peculiar and appropriate to the *Logos*, in conjunction "with the man Jeſus, with whom he has united himſelf." Fleming's Chriſtology, V. 3. p. 625, 626.

moſt

moſt intimate union with the Deity, is the object of our Obedience, our Worſhip, and our Faith, and *is over all, God bleſſed for ever. Amen*[y].

[y] *Rom.* ix. 5.

SERMON VII.

ROM. X. 10.

With the heart man believeth unto Righteouſneſs, and with the mouth confeſſion is made unto Salvation.

THE great Apoſtle of the Gentiles, in this elaborate part of his Epiſtle to the Roman converts, is earneſtly ſolicitous to eſtabliſh the profeſſion of Chriſtianity upon the firmeſt foundation, as well with regard to the inward perſuaſion of the mind, as the outward conformity of the practice. His addreſs was to Jews

Jews rigidly tenacious of the cuſtoms of their fathers; who imagined themſelves ſecure in the principles of their Religion, becauſe they were of the ſeed of Abraham, and therefore born within the covenant which God made with him and his family; and alſo, becauſe the law itſelf was more peculiarly confirmed to them, in the obſervance of which they expected to be juſtified.

To convince them of their miſtakes in theſe particulars, the Apoſtle aſſures them, *that they are not all Iſrael, which are of Iſrael*[a]: for *the children of the fleſh are not the children of God: but the children of the promiſe are counted for the ſeed*[b]. Nay, moreover, that this very law, on which they thus relied for juſtification, was inſufficient for that purpoſe; *becauſe they ſought it not by Faith, but as it were by the works of the Law*[c]. In reality, it had higher views and a further end, namely, to direct their fiducial regards to Chriſt; whoſe Goſpel, ſuperſeding the works of

[a] *Rom.* ix. 6. [b] *Rom.* ix. 8.
[c] *Rom.* ix. 32.

the

the ceremonial Law, was to be preached to all men, as well to Gentiles as to Jews, as a compleat everlaſting covenant neceſſary for Salvation and final Acceptance with God.

This ſounded harſh to thoſe who, knowing the divine original of their Law, could form no idea of any other Righteouſneſs, but what aroſe from obedience to that Law. Whoever diſcharged his duty in that reſpect, did, in their opinion, as much as God or man could require of him. In anſwer to this the Apoſtle argued; that they quite miſtook the intention of their own Law, if they looked not, through it, to Chriſt: That Abraham himſelf, their illuſtrious anceſtor, ſought juſtification upon the very terms of that Goſpel which he was recommending to them, viz. by Faith in the promiſes of God: That, as theſe promiſes were made to him *when he was in uncircumciſion* [d], both *Jews* and *Gentiles* were included in them; for *he is the God of them both* [e], and all *have peace with him* [f],

[d] *Rom.* iv. 10. [e] *Rom.* iii. 29.
[f] *Rom.* v. 1.

being

being juſtified by the ſame means; by a Righteouſneſs derived ſolely from Faith in *our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who is the end of the Law for Righteouſneſs to every one that believeth*[g]. This new and better Covenant, not of works, but of grace, was now manifeſtly revealed; and true faith in Chriſt, with ſincere confeſſion of him, were henceforth made the ſtipulated conditions of Salvation.

The Jewiſh zealot might ſtartle at the apprehenſion of its aboliſhing his old Religion, and all the ritual Ordinances of the Sanctuary. The Gentile philoſopher alſo, from ſeeing no images, no altars, no ſacrifices, might be equally offended at a Religion ſo void of pomp and ſhew: And though he ſet no value upon it himſelf, he could not bear to ſee his ancient ſuperſtition run down; if for no other reaſon, but becauſe it was eſtabliſhed by Law[h]. Both

[g] *Rom.* x. 4.

[h] Ego eas, (opiniones ſcilicet, quas a majoribus accepimus de Diis immortalibus, ſacra, cæremonias, religioneſque) defendam ſemper, ſemperque defendi: nec me ex ea opinione, quam a majoribus accepi de cultu Deorum immortalium, ullius unquam oratio aut docti, aut indocti movebit. Cicero de Natura Deorum, L. iii. S. 2.

however

however were called to relinquish their prejudices, and to accede to that real Religion which required them to *worship God in spirit and in truth*[1].

Not that from hence they, or any other future adversaries, should conclude, that Christianity consisted wholly in mental, spiritual graces; or that, if a man had what he thought the answer of a good conscience from within, was inwardly persuaded of the rectitude of his actions, there was no occasion to shew any outward conformity to the requisitions of his Faith; or indeed, to make any publick acknowledgement or confession of the Religion which he had embraced upon the principles of reason and conviction.

To guard against the mischiefs of so dangerous a delusion, the Apostle expressly assures his new converts, that as Faith is the root of all inward Religion, so confession is the necessary outward demonstration of it: *for with the heart man believeth unto*

[1] *John* iv. 24.

Righteouſneſs, and with the mouth confeſſion is made unto Salvation. In the preceding verſe, the order of the words is inverted; where, ſpeaking of the only way to obtain Righteouſneſs or Juſtification, he advances this poſition: *If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved*[k]. But though the words may be tranſpoſed, the doctrine and ſignification of both are the ſame: Clearly importing, in the language of a late valuable expoſitor, that "God hath given "a very plain and intelligible Revelation "in his Goſpel; and the ſubſtance of it is "this, that *if thou* doſt *confeſs with thy* "*mouth, that Jeſus is the Lord, and at* the "ſame time *believe in thy heart,* with a "vital and influential Faith, *that God hath* "*raiſed him from the dead,* in proof of his "divine miſſion; *thou ſhalt* aſſuredly *be* "*ſaved. . . . . For* it is *with the heart* that "a man *believeth to Righteouſneſs*, or ſo as to "obtain juſtification; nor can any thing "but a cordial aſſent ſecure that; *and with*

[k] *Rom.* x. 9.

"*the*

" *the mouth confeſſion is made to Salvation,*
" and that publick profeſſion of Chriſtia-
" nity is maintained, without which a ſecret
" conviction of its truth would only con-
" demn him[1]."

This is the Doctrine enforced in the words before us, which ſhall be further conſidered, by reflecting,

Firſt, Upon the nature and neceſſity of that inward principle of Faith requiſite for our Righteouſneſs or Juſtification.

Secondly, Upon the equal neceſſity of a publick confeſſion of it.

Whatſoever is revealed in the Goſpel, is moſt undoubtedly the object of a Chriſtian Faith, and demands our aſſent upon the evidence of that divine Authority. But though it be univerſally acknowledged, that it is as much the duty of Chriſtians to believe, as to obey; yet many

[1] Doddridge's Family Expoſitor, Vol. IV. in Loc.

amongſt us have widely differed in their notions concerning the nature of this belief. Some have looked upon it in no higher light, than as the bare aſſent of the mind to the credibility of divine Revelation: Thus making it no more a virtue to believe what is related of Chriſt in the Scriptures, than what is recorded of eminent perſons in the annals of common hiſtorians.

Others, on the contrary, contemplating the excellent commendations aſcribed to Faith, the exalted privileges, and the glorious rewards hereafter promiſed to it in Scripture, have no leſs haſtily concluded it to be the ſum and ſubſtance of Religion itſelf: And that nothing more is neceſſary to compleat our final Salvation, but an implicit acquieſcence in whatſoever they perſuade themſelves comes recommended to them by ſo diſtinguiſhed an appellation. Both theſe extremes are abſurd and dangerous. True evangelical Faith is neither that which ariſeth from a view of hiſtorical evidence only; nor is it ſo meritorious as to ſecure to us happineſs and life eternal, without

without the concurrent teſtimony of thoſe "good works, which ſpring out neceſſari-"ly of it, inſomuch, that by them a lively "Faith may be as evidently known, as a "tree diſcerned by the fruit[m]:" It is not a bare ſpeculative notion of God and Religion, or yielding our aſſent to matters of fact undeniably proved. It is not only the ſettled conviction of our reaſon, but it is the inward perſuaſion of the heart and affections; by which it thus becomes the true principle of all virtuous active obedience.

Conſidered in this light, the Chriſtian Faith, ſo neceſſarily inſtrumental to juſtification, is not ſo much a natural as a religious principle. It is a grace which diſpoſeth us to a ready and immoveable truſt in God; to a belief in his word, and to an unfeigned ſubmiſſion to his authority. It is paying an awful deference to the word of God, as ſuch; and not as the reſult of any human teſtimony, which is weak and fallible; and our credit thereunto would

[m] Art. XII.

be more concerned with the matter than with the divine evidence. And though knowledge and underſtanding are requiſite to the perfection of it; yet as its peculiar character is an aſſured confidence and a joyful hope, ariſing as much from the affections, as from the underſtanding; it teaches us ſilently to adore that wiſdom, love, and mercy of God, which we cannot adequately comprehend, or fully expreſs.

True it is, that from miſunderſtanding the doctrine of Juſtification, many unhappy doubts and diſputes have ariſen amongſt Chriſtians concerning the nature, mode, and degrees of it: Some contending warmly for the ſufficiency of good works; others as zealouſly maintaining the all-powerful efficacy of Faith; each pleading apoſtolical authority, to exclude what is equally with the other the neceſſary condition of juſtifying Righteouſneſs. There are alſo thoſe, who not attending to the difference between divine and human Faith, but ſuppoſing them both to ſpring from the ſame fountain, and to be ſupported by the ſame evidence, have been too much inclined to look upon a fiducial aſſent,

as

as a kind of affront upon the human underſtanding, and an intolerable encroachment upon the liberty of private judgement: It being the firſt axiom in their ſchool, that Reaſon alone is the meaſure and ſtandard of Truth, and a perfect and compleat rule of duty in all caſes, both towards God and man. Moſt aſſuredly an implicit bigotted adherence to the doctrines or opinions of men is ſhamefully baſe and ſervile; and altogether to regulate our judgement, and to form our conduct upon the conceits and authority of others, of any ſect or party, is inconſiſtent with the dignity of Reaſon, and the liberty of Chriſtians. But, nevertheleſs, this very principle which, when conſidered with reſpect to men, is pitiful and mean; in regard to God, is virtuous and honourable.

If we are ſatisfied with the authority which enjoins the ſeveral articles of our belief, it muſt be a moſt preſumptuous offence to diſpute their truth or to refuſe our aſſent, becauſe we do not perfectly ſee and underſtand the reaſonableneſs or neceſſity of thoſe injunctions, or are not able to conclude deciſively concerning them. Abra-

ham, who is distinguished as the Father of the Faithful, paid an absolute unreserved submission to the will of God, when he left his own *country and kindred*[n], *and went out not knowing whither he went*[o]. Nay, when his Faith was put to its strongest trial, and he was commanded to sacrifice his Son, the beloved child of his old age, and the special heir of promise, he did not argue, but obeyed; *being strong in faith, giving glory to God*[p], he doubted not; but *against hope believed in hope*[q].

If there be any virtue, merit, or praise in Faith, it must consist in putting our full trust and assurance in the promises of God, in a chearful resignation to his authority as such, without the vain attempt to explore or to account for all the dispensations of his providence, or the whole reason of his laws. "For as nothing finite has reality "enough to represent infinite, so neither can "any thing finite have capacity enough to "comprehend it . . . A finite Being there-"fore must have a finite understanding, and "a finite understanding must have a finite

[n] *Acts* vii. 3. [o] *Heb.* xi. 8.
[p] *Rom.* iv. 20. [q] *Rom.* iv. 18.

"per-

"perfection [q];" or there could be no difference between beings perfect and imperfect, finite and infinite. In all cases, the veracity of *God that cannot lye* [r], nor deceive, is our sufficient security. To rest our assent upon this, is fixing it upon the very *pillar and ground of the truth* [s], whose foundation standeth firm and sure, for *its builder and maker is God* [t]: So that we may confidently say with the Apostle, *I know whom I have believed* [u], even him, who is able to make us perfect, *thoroughly furnished unto all good works* [w].

Such is the true Christian Faith so essentially necessary to Salvation, and so certainly productive of good works. Animated with this vital principle, we shall not remain indolently satisfied with a secret mental persuasion only; but as we have believed with the heart, so shall we,

Secondly, See the necessity of evidencing these convictions; and shall rejoice in

[q] Norris on Reason and Faith, p. 206, 207.
[r] *Tit.* i. 2. [s] 1 *Tim.* iii. 15. [t] *Heb.* xi. 10.
[u] 2 *Tim.* i. 12. [w] 2 *Tim.* iii. 17.

every

every opportunity of making a publick confeſſion of them with our mouths, teſtifying openly to others what we have inwardly felt and experienced ourſelves.

As by Faith is meant, not only a general belief in Chriſt, but a confidential truſt, a cordial acquieſcence in his merits and mediation, as our Saviour and Redeemer; ſo by confeſſion, in like manner, ſomething more is to be underſtood, than a mere verbal acknowledgement of what he did and ſuffered for us. It is ſolemnly owning his mediatorial authority, and profeſſing all gratitude and praiſe for the bleſſings and mercies ſecured for us by him, whoſe love was ſtronger than death: And though this confeſſion with the mouth be not an efficient cauſe of holineſs, it is not improperly reputed one of thoſe neceſſary good works, flowing from the powerful energy of a true Faith. It is not mechanically repeating a form of words arranged into Creeds and Articles; but it is the viſible teſtimony of a virtuous life, deriving its obedience from evangelical motives, which is the true available confeſſion of Chriſt. And as this confeſ-

ſion

ſion muſt be thus illuſtrated in the practice and lives of men, ſo muſt it be publickly declared with their mouths; for to believe in Chriſt, and not to publiſh and glory in ſuch belief, would be, like Nicodemus, to come to him ſecretly and in the dark; if not rather, like Peter, to renounce him in the hour of difficulty and temptation.

Whoſoever, ſays our divine Maſter, *ſhall confeſs me before men*, openly acknowledging his fidelity to me, *him will I confeſs alſo before my Father which is in heaven*, rewarding him as ſolemnly as he hath owned me. *But whoſoever ſhall deny*, renounce, or be aſhamed of *me*, or his relation to me *before men, him will I alſo deny*, diſown, and reject, in the moſt conſpicuous manner, even *before my Father which is heaven, and before the angels of God* [x].

This declaration abundantly marks the neceſſity of an outward profeſſion of the Goſpel, as well as of the inward principle of Faith. Such a profeſſion is neceſſary,

[x] *Matt.* x. 32, 33. *Luke* xii. 8, 9.

that

that men miſtake not in a matter of ſo great conſequence, but may *be ready always to give an anſwer to every one that aſketh them a reaſon of the hope that is in them*[y]; that they may be taught to avoid error and confuſion, and may be early guarded againſt any deſtructive doctrines which, through ignorance or deſign, may occaſionally begin anew to weaken the truths and evidences of the Goſpel. Moreover that proper means of defence may be at hand, and compriſed in ſuch terms as may beſt expreſs the preciſe meaning of the word of God; thoſe leading articles which either comprehend the fundamentals of Chriſtianity, diſtinguiſhing it in general from other Religions, or are the deſcriptive terms of Communion in the ſeveral Churches of Chriſt, have uſually been drawn up under the mode or denomination of Creeds; and theſe are made the teſt of admiſſion into the Chriſtian Church in general, as well as into the profeſſion of every religious community.

[y] 1 *Pet.* iii. 15.

Not

Not that the Church takes upon herſelf indiſcriminately to propoſe articles of Faith to be received and aſſented to, upon her own authority; but, upon the full perſuaſion and conviction of their being agreeable to the revealed will of God. The Apoſtles themſelves judged this to be expedient, the better to deliver down to lateſt poſterity, *according to the proportion* or analogy *of Faith* [z], pure and unadulterated that Doctrine which they preached. They plainly foreſaw that hereſies would, in after times, ſpring up and multiply, *and ſome would depart* or apoſtatize *from the Faith, by giving heed to ſeducing ſpirits* [a]. It was therefore the exhortation of St. Paul to his beloved Timothy, that he ſhould *keep that which was committed to his truſt* [b]: or, as he afterwards explains it, ſhould *hold faſt that form of ſound words* [c]; that pattern or exemplar of divine truths, which he had depoſited with him. So neceſſary did it ſeem to this great Apoſtle, to ſecure the aſſent of believers to

[z] *Rom.* xii. 6. Κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως.
[a] 1 *Tim.* iv. 1. Ἀποστήσονται τινες τῆς πίστεως.
[b] 1 *Tim.* vi. 20. [c] 2 *Tim.* i. 13.

that

that ſyſtem of doctrines which he had committed to the particular care of this his favourite convert, *his own ſon in the Faith*[d]; as containing neceſſary directions to him, and to all future paſtors of the church, for the conſcientious diſcharge of their duty, when advanced to ſtations of rule and government in the miniſtry.

This aſſent was originally required of the Catechumens, previous to their Baptiſm, from the very firſt inſtitution of Chriſtianity[e]. A profeſſion of faith, a promiſe

[d] 1 *Tim.* i. 2.

[e] We read, *Acts*, ch. ii. that an open publick profeſſion, or declaration of obedience to the Faith of *Jeſus* as *Lord and Chriſt*, with *repentance of ſins*, were the terms which St. Peter repreſented to thoſe Jews, who were awakened, and converted by his firſt Sermon at Jeruſalem upon the day of Pentecoſt, as indiſpenſable requiſites, before they could be received by the initiatory rites of Baptiſm into the Goſpel-covenant. Thus when Philip *preached Jeſus* to the Æthiopian Eunuch, whoſe converſion is recorded in *Acts*, ch. viii. *I believe that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God*, was the confeſſion he made previous to his admiſſion into the Chriſtian Church. Thus alſo, *Believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, was the ſtipulated condition, when Paul and Silas baptized the Jailer at Philippi, *Acts*, ch. xvi. This was the apoſtolical uſage. "The declaration "of Juſtin the Martyr, (in the next century, Apol. I. Sect. "79.) concerning Baptiſm, ſheweth, how ſuch as the Church "in thoſe days did baptize, made profeſſion of Chriſtian be-"lief, and undertook to live accordingly." Hooker Eccleſ. Pol. B. v. S. 63.

of

of obedience, by way of ſolemn ſtipulation, was the preſcriptive rule in all the churches. In the infancy indeed of the Goſpel, when faith was ſtrong, and errors were few, the form was ſhort, and the words were ſimple: "The ſubſtance of Chriſtian belief was compendiouſly drawn up into few and ſhort "articles, to the end that the weakneſs of "no man's wit might either hinder altogether the knowledge, or excuſe the utter ignorance of needful things[f]." Afterwards when men began to corrupt the ſimplicity of truth, preaching in effect *another Goſpel, than that they had received*[g], and reproaching the Church, that its higheſt point of wiſdom was implicit belief; and many erroneous notions were moſt induſtriouſly diſſeminated: It became neceſſary, not to propoſe new articles of Faith, for no Church upon earth is entruſted with ſuch powers; but to aſcertain the ſenſe and import of thoſe before eſtabliſhed upon the foundation of ſcriptural and apoſtolical authority.

[f] Hooker's Eccleſ. Polity. B. v. S. 18.
[g] *Gal.* i. 9.

In

In doing this, the Church doth not arrogate to herſelf the power of lording it over the conſcience; but only to declare her ſenſe and reſolution of controverted points; to preſerve peace and unity in her ſervices; and to prevent diſſenſions and animoſities amongſt her members. Her determination however is of no farther weight, than as a probable argument for the right interpretation of Scripture; for after all, faith in fundamentals is the neceſſary undeniable obligation; and the Scriptures, as they are the only center of union between Chriſtians, ſo are they the ſole rule of Chriſt's Faith. "Now the prin-
"ciples whereupon we do build our ſouls,
"have their evidence where they had their
"original, and as received from thence
"we adore them, we hold them in reve-
"rend admiration, we neither argue nor
"diſpute about them, we give unto them
"that aſſent which the Oracles of God re-
"quire. . . . That therefore which is true,
"and neither can be diſcerned by ſenſe,
"nor concluded by mere natural princi-
"ples, muſt have principles of revealed
"truth

" truth whereupon to build itſelf, and an " habit of faith in us wherewith principles " of that kind are apprehended [h]."

As no Religion can be maintained or kept up without ſome ſyſtem of belief; ſo no religious ſociety can be eſtabliſhed without ſome rule or badge of diſtinction, without ſome proof or evidence of the harmony of faith and confeſſion received by that ſociety. The Church of England, with a candour almoſt peculiar to herſelf, freely acknowledges, " that whatſoever is not " read in Scripture, nor may be proved " thereby, is not to be required of any " man, that it ſhould be believed as an ar- " ticle of the Faith, or be thought requiſite " or neceſſary to Salvation [i]." " That as the " Church ought not to decree any thing " againſt Holy Writ, ſo beſides the ſame " ought it not to enforce any thing to be " believed for neceſſity of Salvation [k]." And thoſe Creeds which ſhe receives, ſhe receives and profeſſes upon the preſumption, " that they may be proved by moſt certain

[h] Hooker's Eccleſ. Polity, B. v. S. 63.
[i] Art. VI. [k] Art. XX.

"warrants of Holy Scripture[l]." Where this appeal fails, ſhe is deſirous that the authority which enjoins ſuch doctrines, or interpretations of them, ſhould fail alſo.

Under ſuch liberal conceſſions and declarations, ſhe hath adopted and inſerted, in the publick ſervices of her religious Offices, thoſe formularies or confeſſions of Faith, "which were the Creeds of the "Weſtern Church before the Reforma-"tion; and becauſe at the Reformation ſhe "withdrew from nothing but what was "corrupt; and therefore theſe being Ca-"tholick and ſound, ſhe ſtill retains "them[m]." But however ſo cautious is ſhe not arbitrarily to impoſe doctrines of Faith upon her members; that if we attend to the reſtrictions in thoſe articles juſt now referred to, it will evidently appear, that theſe ſeveral Creeds are not received and recommended, either upon their own imaginary authority; or upon the credit of the reputed compoſers of them; but, upon the ſuppoſition that they are grounded upon the foundation of Scrip-

[l] Art. VIII.

[m] Wheatley's Moyers Lectures, Sermon II. p. 84.

ture,

ture, as perfectly conſonant to the Doctrines delivered in thoſe Sacred Writings; and as being little elſe, than ſo many allowed deduced extracts from them.

Upon this allegation, the Doctrines they contain have ever been held as truths of real moment and importance. As ſuch they were at firſt compiled; as ſuch they have ever ſince been maintained and defended; and as ſuch the acknowledgement of them in every Chriſtian Church hath been uniformly received, and they have been declared to be the Catholick Faith. The formal and preciſe terms indeed in which they are conceived, may not perhaps be found expreſſly or literally in ſo many words in Scripture; yet do they contain and affirm the ſame Doctrines which thoſe divine Oracles of truth teach and expreſs in other terms, or in words of the ſame import and ſignification. Theſe we ſhould have been as much obliged to receive and abide by, if they had not been modelled into the form of Creeds; becauſe they are founded upon the revealed will of God: And the ſeveral articles which conſtitute them, are thoſe

very Doctrines, in the belief of which Christianity consists; and by which Christians must hereafter be examined and judged.

So careful is the Church to instruct and retain her members in that sound Faith which Christ and his Apostles left in charge as a sacred deposit; that as with the heart men are required to believe to justification, so with the mouth confession should be made of those articles, which the heart acknowledges as containing the substance of godly Faith. *Whosoever abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God*[n], nor any communion or interest with him. Creeds therefore are necessary barriers to prevent the inroads of those false teachers, who either from too violent an attachment to a favourite hypothesis, or, upon the presumption of the powers of natural Reason, take upon them to contradict, or explain away the peculiar doctrines of Revelation; such who privily *bring in*, or by various insinuations, *lying in wait to deceive*[o], are assiduous to introduce *damnable heresies*, here-

[n] 2 *John*, ver. 9.
[o] *Ephes.* iv. 14.

sies

ſies productive of calamitous and deſtructive conſequences, which tend to the renouncing and *denying* the powers, grace, merits, ſatisfaction, and atonement of *the Lord that bought* and redeemed *them* [p]; even *the only Lord God, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt* [q].

This is the language of two Apoſtles, deſcribing the nature of ſuch heinous offences. Indeed the Scriptures throughout ſpeak of the authors and fomenters of ſuch pernicious Doctrines in terms of the ſevereſt indignation and abhorrence. They call them *ravening* and *grievous wolves* [r], *liars* [s], *deceivers* [t], *ſeducers* [u], *falſe prophets, yea Antichriſts* [w]. But notwithſtanding all theſe explicit marks of direct reprobation, the ſubtle adverſary of God and man hath ever been inceſſant in *ſowing tares amongſt the wheat* [x]; and Hereſy is a general calamity which hath more or leſs affected the univerſal Church, from the very foundation of Chriſtianity: And though it may ſometimes aſſume an harmleſs and indifferent meaning, yet in the religious acceptation

[p] 2 *Pet.* ii. 1. *Acts* xx. 29. [q] *Jude*, ver. 4. [r] *Matt.* vii. 15.
[s] 1 *John* ii. 22. [t] 2 *John*, ver. 7.
[u] 1 *John* ii. 26. [w] 1 *John* iv. 1, and 3. [x] *Matt.* xiii. 25.

of the word, it is for the moſt part underſtood in a bad ſenſe, as implying error, that is, miſtaking falſe Doctrines for true: For though every error be not an Hereſy, yet falſhood and error conſtitute the moſt uſual idea of it. It is alſo an error in fundamentals, ſubverſive of truth and piety; as in the inſtance before produced by St. Peter, of thoſe who *denied the Lord who bought them*[y]: Which, whether it preciſely means denying the reality of Chriſt's human or divine nature, or his ſatisfaction, is an error of the firſt magnitude; whether we refer it to the Nicolaitans and Gnoſticks, thoſe early diſturbers of the peace of the Church; or, whether we apply it to the Arians and Socinians, the ſucceeding enemies of the Faith; or indeed by whatever reſpect men deny the Lord, their Redeemer, and their God, his nature, or his offices, it muſt be an hereſy of perdition; ſuch as diſtinguiſhes itſelf by its oppoſition to ſome of the main branches of the Goſpel Faith, promotes diſcord and confuſion; and by traducing the honour of his Son, is nothing leſs than blaſphemy againſt God.

[y] 2 *Pet.* ii. 1.

There

There are indeed thoſe who make Hereſy and Schiſm, if not the ſame, yet as to their conſequences very nearly allied: For though the weight and importance of the Doctrine denied be what principally impreſſes the ſignature of Hereſy upon it; yet even an error, which is not fundamental, if it be obſtinately adhered to, and openly publiſhed, leading to the breach of Charity and Peace, may not improperly deſerve the name, and incur the ſame cenſure. When men raſhly and wantonly adopt any ſingular, though not offenſive, opinions in Religion, (and opinion is only ſomething between ignorance and knowledge) yet if they ſharply contend about them, perſevere in, and propagate them to others, they give them in ſome degree the nature of heretical pravity.

Contentions are often as violent about ſmaller points, as greater matters. If by theſe means, different Sects are formed and encouraged upon principles of ſpeculation and abſolute indifference, we are authorized by St. Paul to give ſuch diſſenſions the appellation of Schiſms and Hereſies. I

hear, ſays this vigilant Apoſtle in one of his Epiſtles to the Corinthians, *that there be diviſions* or ſchiſms *among you*[z]. From thence aſcending as to an higher degree of the ſame crime, he adds, *for there muſt be alſo hereſies among you*, that the faith and ſteadineſs of thoſe *which are approved may be made manifeſt*[a]. Such differences in opinion, when applied to the breaking the peace and unity of the Church by needleſs and uncharitable diſputes, bear the appellation of Schiſms. If they increaſe and proceed ſo far as to ſubvert the Doctrines of Faith and Truth, they then become the aggravated crime of Hereſy. And this is a kind of luſt or wantonneſs of the mind, of ſo corrupt and vicious a complection, as to be ranked *among the works of the fleſh*[b], proceeding from that natural corruption which *defiles the mind*[c]; for ſtrife, ſeditions, wraths, envyings, and ſuch like, are its uſual concomitants.

Syſtematical Divines have indeed been too apt to conſider Hereſy in two lights,

[z] 1 *Cor.* xi. 18. [a] 1 *Cor.* xi. 19. [b] *Gal.* v. 19, 20. [c] *Tit.* i. 15.

as

as ſimple and compound. A diſtinction more nice than neceſſary; for it may poſſibly happen to be no more than mere opinion or theory; an intellectual error only, and ſo not cognizable by man; but ſolely under his juriſdiction who trieth and ſearcheth the heart. It is practical and doctrinal hereſy againſt which the Church hath power to guard her members, to prevent, as much as in her lieth, the publication and infection of ſuch error and falſhood; and her cenſures are directed, not ſo much againſt ſimple opinions entertained in the mind, as againſt errors taught and ſcattered abroad [d].

Such are the falſe teachers we find deſcribed by ſome ancient writers, who in the name of Chriſt and Moſes fight againſt them both [e]. Such are thoſe, who ſcruple not to communicate with the Church, and perhaps ſubſcribe to its Articles, and wait at its Altars; whilſt, by their words and

[d] V. Forbeſii Inſtructiones Hiſt. Theol. L. xiv. C. 1. de diſcrimine Eccleſiæ Catholicæ, et Hæreſeos, et Schiſmatis.

[e] Επ ονομαπ Χριστ και Μωσιως, πολεμεσι Χριστω και Μοισει, και εν δορα πεθεατων τ λυκων κρπακρπτεσιν. Conſtitutiones Apoſtolicæ, L. vi. Cap. 13.

writings,

writings, they are induſtriouſly ſullying the purity of its Faith, and calling in queſtion the truth of its doctrines; overlooking, deſpiſing, or rather inſenſible of the immorality of ſo baſe and wicked a conduct, from the preſumptuous confidence of the imaginary innocency of their error. Surely they who can ſo eaſily ſatisfy themſelves, had need to examine well the force of thoſe arguments from whence ſuch concluſions are drawn: What they may deem to be merely notional, or ſimply ſpeculative principles, and too indifferent to have any influence upon practice, may perhaps prove to be eſſential, fundamental Doctrines, and the belief of them neceſſary to entitle them to partake of the benefits of Chriſtianity. St. Peter and St. Paul, in direct contradiction of this fancied abſolute innocence of error, ſtrongly maintain the criminality of thoſe, who, without acting contrary to the convictions of their minds, neglect, (where means of information may be had) a proper impartial care in forming their principles of action [f]. St. Peter in a paſ-

[f] See *Acts* iii. 17. 1 *Tim.* i. 13.

ſage

ſage before referred to, very particularly acquaints us with the common methods which theſe deceivers make uſe of to introduce their Doctrines. *They privily*, ſays he, *bring in damnable hereſies*[g]; privily, that is, under colour of truth and piety, and a ſincere regard for the honour of the Goſpel; not declaring at once their real ſentiments, but ſlyly and artfully; the word in its original meaning is ſtrongly expreſſive of the craft and ſubtle inſinuation of ſuch reprobate teachers.

If the apoſtolical age itſelf felt the pernicious effects of a vain, dogmatizing ſpirit; if ſucceeding periods of the Church have experienced the ſame inconveniences; we are not to expect the preſent days to be more exempt from ſuch troubles, and ſuch complaints; in which ſo *many unruly, and vain talkers, and deceivers*[h] abound. We have ſeen what our own Church hath done to preſerve the rule

[g] 2 *Pet.* ii. 1. Οιτινες παρεισαξουσιν αιρεσεις απωλειας.
[h] *Tit.* i. 10.

of

of Faith, as delivered in Scripture, pure and uncorrupt, in order to check the progreſs of heretical invaders; that none of her members be ſeduced for want of proper caution or previous inſtruction: *That we may all ſpeak the ſame thing, and that there be no diviſions among us; but that we be perfectly joined together in the ſame mind, and in the ſame judgement* [i].

What her doctrinal principles are, does evidently appear from thoſe Creeds ſhe hath embodied in her publick religious ſervices, as ſo many ſcriptural truths. Notwithſtanding all the many popular and plauſible objections which are ſo frequently and ſo invidiouſly alleged againſt theſe Creeds, this is certain, that none but thoſe who are enemies to the Faith of Chriſt, will ever oppoſe the Doctrines eſtabliſhed in them. For this reaſon it is expedient, and even neceſſary, to retain theſe criterions of ſound Doctrine. "And when we have no ene-"mies remaining to find fault with the "Doctrines, there will be none to object

[i] 1 *Cor.* i. 10.

"againſt

"againſt the uſe of the Creeds, or ſo "much as to wiſh to have them laid "aſide [k]." For the ſame authority which affirmeth that *with the heart, man believeth unto Righteouſneſs*; declareth alſo, that *with the mouth confeſſion is made unto Salvation.*

[k] Dr. Waterland's Critical Hiſtory of the Athanaſian Creed, p. 292.

SERMON VIII.

HEB. IV. 2.

Unto us was the Goſpel preached, as well as unto them, but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

WHEN we attentively conſider thoſe ſeveral evidences, which abundantly demonſtrate the Goſpel of of Chriſt to be the word of God; ſome of which it hath been the endeavour of the preceding Diſcourſes to illuſtrate: It cannot but afford us frequent occaſions of wonder

wonder and concern to obſerve, that its acknowledged truth and importance are not always accompanied with a proportionable degree of weight and influence on the lives of men; and that, however excellent its doctrines, however ſtrong the motives, or forcible the obligations contained in it are, for promoting virtue and knowledge, yet nevertheleſs they are too often found inſufficient or ineffectual to regulate the general practice of the world.

Hence wicked men and unbelievers have advanced a popular objection againſt the truth and authority of Chriſtianity, by arguing, that ſuch a ſcheme of Salvation can hardly be ſuppoſed to be the revealed will of the Almighty, from the little efficacy it is ſeen to have even upon profeſſed believers. They hear them ſpeciouſly haranguing upon all the ſeveral branches and peculiar characters of their Religion, yet without giving that teſtimony of their conviction, and of their faith, which their Maſter hath declared to be the only infallible ſign of both, their love to God and man.

It were to be wiſhed indeed, for the honour of Religion itſelf, that this objection could be anſwered by denying the fact, rather than by ſeeking after reaſons to account for the miſconduct. But whatever be the cauſe, it is certainly not owing to any defect in the Goſpel itſelf; either for want of more light, or clearer inſtruction: For ſurely, it hath all the external and internal proofs of truth which the moſt profound enquiry can demand; and it affords alſo all the moſt reaſonable conviction that an intelligent and free agent can deſire.

What kind or degree of influence then could ſatisfy ſuch objectors, unleſs they expected that God ſhould make men mere machines, and compel them to be good, whether they would or no? He has ſupported his word however with as engaging, perſuaſive, and powerful motives, as are conſiſtent with our freedom of will, and moral agency, ſo far to direct our obedience, as to render us reſponſible for our deviations from it.

In the foregoing part of this Epiſtle, the Apoſtle expatiates upon the ſingular excellency of that Goſpel he was recommending to his Hebrew converts, as greatly ſuperior to *the word ſpoken by Angels* [a]. Such and ſo great was the original preeminence of Chriſt, that thoſe glorious Beings, who were honourably diſtinguiſhed at the delivery of the Law, at the promulgation of the Covenant made with the Fathers at mount Sinai, were only ſo many *miniſtring ſpirits ſent forth* [b] to attend him upon earth, and to act in ſubſerviency to his orders: For exalted as their nature was, it was greatly ſubordinate to his tranſcendent character, who *inherited a more excellent name than they* [c], as being the Son of God himſelf. The Jews had ever been accuſtomed to entertain the profoundeſt veneration for Moſes their divine Legiſlator: He truly, *was faithful in all his houſe* [d]; but it was only *as a ſervant*, in an inferior department, appointed *for a teſtimony of thoſe things which were to be ſpoken after* [e], of that better diſpenſation which the Apoſtle

[a] *Heb.* ii. 2. [b] *Heb.* i. 14. [c] *Heb.* i. 4.
[d] *Heb.* iii. 2. [e] *Heb.* iii. 5.

was

was now announcing. If they had examined the promiſes of God made to Adam, to Abraham, and to others of their anceſtors recorded in the Law and the Prophets, they would have found compriſed in them the ſum and ſubſtance of that doctrine which *he preached* unto them: The whole Moſaical adminiſtration being calculated to confirm this word, and previouſly to inſtruct them in the nature and meaning, and prepare them for the accompliſhment of thoſe promiſes, *until the time of* full and final *Reformation ſhould come*[f]; when *that diſpenſation* ſhould be revealed, in which *God would gather together in one all things in Chriſt*[g], and their religious worſhip and ſervices ſhould be directed to their proper ſpiritual deſignation.

Upon this account *it was neceſſary that the word of God ſhould firſt have been ſpoken to them*[h]; and they were informed that the preſent more perfect manifeſtation of it, by the perſonal appearance and preaching of Jeſus or Chriſt the Meſſiah, was in

[f] *Heb.* ix. 10. [g] *Epheſ.* i. 10.
[h] *Acts* xiii. 46.

truth nothing more than the carrying on and compleating of the ſame original plan of Revelation, which had been previouſly communicated to them through the medium of their own Scriptures. From hence aroſe the equal obligation of faith and obedience to Chriſt in Jew as well as in Chriſtian. But with all theſe extraordinary ſignatures of divine Authority, the Apoſtle obſerves, that *the word preached*, or of hearing, as it is more literally rendered [i], actually profited them not; that is, they received no advantage from, they did not improve it, though it was the foundation of their own Religion; becauſe it was *not mixed with faith in them that heard it*. Agreeably to what we are told elſewhere, that *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* [k] declaring the neceſſity of it. This is the Doctrine meant to be enforced in the paſſage before us; that as *the word* of God *preached* formerly to the Fathers *in the wilderneſs*, became unfruitful to them *becauſe of* their diſobedience and *unbelief* [l]; ſo neither will it profit us Chriſtians to have *the*

[i] Ο λογος της ακοης.
[k] *Rom.* x. 17. [l] *Heb.* iii. 17. 19.

Goſpel

Gospel preached, and to hear and read those Scriptures which reveal it, unless we receive and obey it as the word of God. This will appear more plainly if we consider,

First, The connexion between the Word and Faith.

Secondly, The causes which obstruct their united Influence.

The union between the Word and Faith is so close and intimate, that as Faith cannot be without the Word, so the Word without or separate from the other, is nothing more than a dead letter, or mere useless Creed. Not that the efficacy of the Word in the least dependeth upon us, for that standeth sure and immutable: *For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief* or rejection of the Gospel, as St. Paul argues with the Romans, *make the faith*, or promises *of God* void and *without effect*[m]? *God forbid*, that such a thought should be harboured; *yea* surely, *let God be true, but*

[m] *Rom.* iii. 3.

every man, who indulgeth ſuch blaſphemous cogitations, *a lyar*[n]. His promiſes are made to faithful ſervants: *If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himſelf*[o], or fruſtrate all his ſolemn declarations of pardon and acceptance.

This word of God is moreover expreſſly noted to be *quick and powerful, and* exceeding *ſharp*[p]; but ſtill it cannot penetrate into the heart except Faith ſhall firſt procure its admiſſion; and it will not be *the power* or inſtrument *of God unto Salvation*, but *to thoſe who believe*. *Therein* indeed *is the Righteouſneſs of God revealed from faith to faith*[q], by freſh, repeated, and increaſing exerciſes of it; which, in the progreſs of our religious attainments, will be ever opening to us farther and more encouraging views of the inexhauſtible grace and fulneſs of that glorified head of our nature, who *came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly*[r]. For we muſt firſt believe the Word, before we can accept or partake of the bleſſings of it: Then ſhall

[n] *Rom.* iii. 4. [o] 2 *Tim.* ii. 13. [p] *Heb.* iv. 12.
[q] *Rom.* i. 16, 17. [r] *John* x. 10.

we

we be empowered *to ſet to our ſeal, that God is true*[s]; and his juſtification will appear the ſame in every different period of the life of grace. Not that the word is, at any time, leſs powerful, or leſs able to convince or convert us; but the promiſe is only to believers: And as there can be no Faith, where there are no Scriptures, or revealed will of God to enjoin and prove it, ſo Faith is the life and ſpirit of the Word, according to that ſaying of the Prophet, *the juſt ſhall live by Faith*[t]; *without which it is impoſſible to pleaſe God*[v]. Indeed wherever the Goſpel is truly received, it never fails of its full ſucceſsful efficacy in promoting the intereſts of Virtue and Religion. But when any are contented to remain in an unconverted ſinful ſtate, they may be confidently pronounced to all good purpoſes, unbelievers or rejectors of the Word.

Such was the power of God, ſuch was the operative prevalency of preaching at the beginning, that numbers were con-

[s] *John* iii. 33. [t] *Hab.* ii. 4.
[v] *Heb.* xi. 6.

verted at once to the Chriſtian Faith. Such alſo of a ſudden was the prodigious change of their conduct from ſin unto holineſs, that they became as *new creatures*[u]: Nay, ſo aſtoniſhing was their renovation, that they who had experienced it themſelves, and therefore could beſt deſcribe it, repreſent it as ſimilar in its effects, and as ſtrange in its operations, as if it had been *a paſſing from death unto life*[w]: They call it *a riſing from the dead*[x]; a *putting on the new man*[y]; a *burial with Chriſt in baptiſm, wherein alſo we are riſen with him through the faith of the operation* or energy *of God*[z].

This extraordinary effect of evangelical Faith laſted not only during the fervour of apoſtolical inſtruction and example, but continued ſome ages after in the Church; inſomuch that ancient eccleſiaſtical writers obſerve, that when Chriſtians were apprehended and brought before magiſtrates to anſwer for themſelves, none were found to come under the denomination of criminals:

[u] 2 *Cor.* v. 17. [w] 1 *John* iii. 14. [x] *Epheſ.* v. 14. [y] *Epheſ.* iv. 24.
[z] *Col.* ii. 12. Διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ Θεοῦ.

None

None of them was charged with or proved guilty of a breach of the moral law. No other accuſation being alleged againſt any, but that of a ſteady adherence to the Religion of Chriſt [b].

Certainly this is an undeniable proof of the power of the Goſpel in thoſe primitive times; and undoubtedly it would have the ſame good effect upon us, in theſe later days, if we believed it as firmly, and upon the ſame principles as they did. Nay, there never was a time, ſince the name of *Jeſus* was firſt preached, even in the darkeſt and moſt ignorant ages of the Church, but the minds of believers were more or leſs affected, according to the ſincerity and ſimplicity of their faith. And if we ſhould compare the Chriſtian nations of the pre-

[b] This is the great complaint which the ancient apologiſts and hiſtorians are ever making, that the name of Chriſtian alone, without any other ſuppoſed or imputed crime, was a ſufficient charge for conviction and execution. Theſe are Chriſtians, was a mark of ignominy frequently inſcribed upon a tablet denoting their guilt, and carried before them, when the martyrs were expoſed to the fury and deriſion of a crouded amphitheatre. See Juſtin Martyr's Apol. S. 3. and 32. Tertullian's Apol. c. 3. and 45. Euſeb. Eccleſ. Hiſt. L. iv. c. 19. and L. v. c. 1.

ſent

ſent age, with thoſe heathens who are unacquainted with the Goſpel, we ſhall ſoon be convinced of the amazing difference there is between the knowledge of the Chriſtian faith, and the ignorance of it.

Far be it therefore from us to ſuppoſe goſpel motives to Godlineſs any ways weak or ineffectual, becauſe ſome wicked or unthinking perſons may go under the appellation of Chriſtians, upon whom they may ſeem to have little or no influence; ſince there is ample proof of many (very many) whoſe general tenor of life demonſtrates, how greatly they are perſuaded of the grace and truth of Chriſt; *whom having not ſeen, they love*[c].

Surely, none of us are ſuch poor proficients in Virtue and Religion, as not to be able confidently to appeal to our own conſciences, whether the voice of God, and the ſecret whiſpers of the holy ſpirit of Grace have not frequently prevented our falling into ſin; or, if we have yielded to

[c] 1 *Pet.* i. 8.

the

the temptations of it, as frequently awakened and urged us to repentance? And whether they have not afterwards given us the reviving comfortable assurances that our iniquities are pardoned, and the guilt of them washed away *by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*[d], *who hath obtained eternal Redemption for us*[e]? Neither can there be a doubt, but that the power and conviction of Faith strengthens and preserves us from sin, and invigorates us with the most animating persuasions of the blessings of the Gospel, *through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord*[f]. *To as many as* thus *receive him doth Christ give power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his name*[g]. So manifest is the connexion between the Word and Faith.

Secondly, We will now consider the causes which obstruct their influence. The first and general reason is that which is hinted in the text, the want of a due proportion of faith, or a strong and leading inclination to unbelief, which in the pre-

[d] 1 *Pet.* i. 2. [e] *Heb.* ix. 12. [f] 2 *Pet.* i. 2. [g] *John* i. 12.

ceding

ceding chapter is called *an evil heart of unbelief*[h]. The *Word*, or Gospel *preached* as naturally produceth faith, as the cause does the effect; but not being properly *mixed* or incorporated together, they fail of the necessary beneficial consequences. Not that the Gospel is either absolutely rejected or any ways lightly spoken of; but because the meaning or import of faith itself is greatly mistaken; and something very different from it usurps the name, and is deemed the essence and substance, and contended for as earnestly as if it was the grace itself.

Faith, in the evangelical sense of the word, doth not signify an opinion taken up at random, or from authority, but a fixed, steady persuasion both of the truth and certainty of the things believed, and of their great weight and importance. *Because iniquity abounds, the love of many is waxed cold*[i]; and numbers take their Religion upon trust, without examining into the nature and foundation of it. *Giving* no *earnest heed to the*

[h] *Heb.* iii. 12.
[i] *Matt.* xxiv. 12.

things

things which they have heard, they eaſily *let them ſlip*[k]. They ſee nothing divine and admirable in it, nothing ſo effectual and perſuaſive as to prevail upon them to anſwer the injunctions of it. They receive indeed and profeſs it, but as a thing of courſe, and without due attention how much their welfare or their ruin depends upon their feeling the power and living the life of Faith; or, on the contrary, yielding to the ſuggeſtions of negligence and incredulity.

But it is not a ſuperficial aſſent, which the Scriptures inculcate as that Faith, the fruits whereof will bring Salvation. This is nothing more than a blind opinion; ſuch a mere formal Faith as cannot ſupply us with ſufficient powers to reſtrain the violence of the paſſions, or correct the deſires of the will. Indeed this ſort of counterfeit Faith doth very often exert itſelf for the name and ſound of Religion, and exults in its eagerneſs and animoſity in expoſing the imaginary ſin and folly of a different judgement with regard to religious

[k] *Heb.* ii. 1.

princi-

principles. When this active zeal ſhall impel men to expreſſions of rancour and bitterneſs, or to actions of violence and perſecution, we have too much cauſe to ſuſpect that they are more ſolicitous for victory than for truth. The ſpirit of the Goſpel is love, gentleneſs, and humility. Where theſe are wanting, whatever pretenſions we may make to truth and faith, they will be but ſo many vain and clamorous appeals; becauſe their neceſſary concomitants, thoſe good fruits of the Spirit, are not found in them.

Another hindrance detrimental to the ſalutary influence of Goſpel Faith is, when men miſtake the ſhadow for the ſubſtance, and ſuppoſe Religion to be what it is not: Making it to conſiſt as much in an attention to preſcribed formalities, as in the exerciſes of inward piety. This is connected with, and is the natural conſequence of the former obſtacle. In this caſe the Goſpel motives, though they may be embraced and believed, will only excite to outward duties, or ſhews of godlineſs, and not in the leaſt contribute to forward that eſſential change of the heart and affections,

which

which is the only perfection of true Religion, the only ſolid aſſurance of a juſtifying Faith. By the rigid and punctual obſervance of ritual injunctions, an habitual facility of oſtentatious, deceitful Religion may be acquired, without knowing what is meant by the inward powers of it.

Thus the Jews of old were frequently cenſured by our bleſſed Lord for their ſcrupulous adherence to the traditions of their Fathers; their tenacious obſervation of external rites and ſervices too often leading them to neglect the weightier matters of the Law, the moral commandments of God. Chriſtians likewiſe may love the word, and flatter themſelves their faith is perfectly pure and ſound, becauſe they walk in all the appointed ordinances of the Church, and earneſtly preſs uniformity to her laws upon principles of Neceſſity and Salvation; whilſt it is to be feared, the bare profeſſion of believing is but too frequently miſtaken for the inward act of Faith: For the Religion of a Chriſtian doth not conſiſt ſo much in fine notions, or orthodox opinions, as in the cultivation of

of thoſe ſeveral virtues and graces which adorn the mind, which ſet forth the glory of God, and promote the general good of mandkind. We Chriſtians, ſays one of the ancients, do not ſpeak great things, but we live them [l]. They did nothing for opinion, but every thing for conſcience ſake; remembring that *the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conſcience, and of faith unfeigned* [m].

To theſe reaſons which render the Word and Faith ineffectual and unprofitable, others of a more vitiated nature may be added. Such as an inattention to the doctrines of Religion in general, when they are never made the ſubject of thought and reflection. Motives are only ſo far effectual, as they are applied to the mind: If they are not weighed and conſidered, they are of no avail; like ſo many idle and unmeaning words, they vaniſh in ſound, carrying nothing on to perfection.

[l] *Non magna eloquimur, ſed vivimus.* Min. Fœlix.—— *Nihil opinionis gratia, omnia conſcientiæ faciam*; is the ſaying of another ancient worthy. [m] 1 *Tim.* i. 5.

Next

Next to this, is that over anxious ſolicitude for temporal advantages, which ſo engroſſes the time and thoughts of many, that they have no leiſure or opportunity duly to attend to the ſuperior excellencies of a divine and ſpiritual Faith. The ſeed of the Goſpel, though ever ſo good, ſown upon ſuch a ſoil is *choked with cares, and riches, and pleaſures of this life, and brings no fruit to perfection* [n]. Men thus attached to the good things of this world, and abſorbed in the ſplendid pageantries of it, loſe all taſte and reliſh of the joys and comforts of Religion, which are only *ſpiritually diſcerned* [o], and with the eye of Faith.

To ſuch the *Goſpel is hid*, but *it is hid to them* becauſe they *are loſt* [p]. It is not for want of a more perfect Revelation: It is not that the Doctrines of it are obſcure and unintelligible: It is not that the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts *handled the word of God deceitfully*, concealing or diſguiſing any part of it. Far from it, with the utmoſt per-

[n] *Luke* viii. 14. [o] 1 *Cor.* ii. 14.
[p] 2 *Cor.* iv. 3.

ſpicuity and plainneſs, *by manifeſtation of the truth*[q], they made it perfectly clear and viſible. The darkneſs and the ignorance which the Apoſtles complained of, originated from the malice of *the God of this world, who hath blinded the minds of them which believe not*[r], in ſuch a manner, *that they hate the light, neither come to the light, leſt their deeds ſhould be reproved*[s]: For the knowledge of the truth diſcovers to them, what they are unwilling to ſee, the baſe ſervitude of ſin, and what they are more unwilling to acknowledge, the danger of their ſinful ſtate. Whilſt they reflect, ſo long are they miſerable: Whilſt the Goſpel reaſons with them *of righteouſneſs, temperance, and judgement to come*, they wiſh with *Felix*, to put off ſo ungrateful a ſubject *to a* more *convenient ſeaſon*[t]. Their paſſions and their prejudices ſo overcome them, that they are deaf to all the advice, and blind to all the motives of the Goſpel, ſo that the knowledge of it profits them not. Certainly as the love of God is ſo conſpicuous in his offers of grace and par-

[q] 2 *Cor.* iv. 2. [r] 2 *Cor.* iv. 4. [s] *John* iii. 20.
[t] *Acts* xxiv. 25.

don,

don, their ſtate muſt be deplorable, who, through wilfulneſs pervert, through pride deſpiſe, or through careleſſneſs neglect them, and thereby unhappily deprive themſelves of the benefit thus graciouſly intended for them. Their only refuge from guilt muſt be their ignorance of their duty; which ignorance proceeds from their unwillingneſs to be at the pains to enquire after and to underſtand the conditions of it; when perhaps they are deficient in no other branch of knowledge, but that which alone *is able to make them wiſe unto Salvation* [a].

Upon theſe accounts, it is no wonder, that the evidences of the Word, and the perſuaſive convictions of Faith are not accompanied with better, and more deſireable effects. Conſidering all things however, it is an abundant proof of their real excellency, that their ſucceſs and prevalency are ſo great in the midſt of ſuch variety of ſects, and of different religious denominations, whoſe divided, ſeparate intereſts and principles are continually claſhing with

[a] 2 *Tim.* iii. 15.

each other; by which unhappy diviſions no ſmall diſcredit is brought on the honour of Religion in general.

For how can we reaſonably expect that the pure and peaceable temper of the Goſpel ſhould reſide in a turbulent, intolerant, or perſecuting diſpoſition? How can Chriſtianity be eſteemed by thoſe who are ſo devoted to the idol of their own proud reaſon, as to ſlight and ſcornfully to reject the aids of Grace and Revelation, and to queſtion the credibility of thoſe Doctrines which their own feeble powers cannot comprehend? How amazingly do greatneſs, wealth, and power engage the heart, and indiſpoſe it for attention to ſpiritual truths? How likewiſe can the arguments of Religion influence ignorant and vicious minds, who have neither time, nor abilities, nor inclination to reflect upon the neceſſity, obligation, or importance of them.

With ſo many obſtructions to retard its progreſs, the little ſway which Religion hath over the world is eaſily accounted for. Surrounded with innumerable ſoliciting tempta-

temptations, ſeduced by the example of a *faithleſs and perverſe generation*[w]; we may aſk, *who* is it that *hath warned us to flee from the wrath to come*[x]? Who is it that at any time diſpoſeth us to holy duties, to virtuous actions, and inſpireth us with good deſires? Certainly no inherent natural power of our own, no arguments or perſuaſions of men, but the voice and word of God. It is the ſound of this trumpet which awakens us from the death of Sin unto the life of Righteouſneſs. It is this divine call of the Spirit which produceth in us a lively faith in Chriſt, and a filial obedience to his will. Without this, the wiſeſt inſtructions of the beſt of men will be ineffectual.

If the word of God be fruitleſs, how much more ſo will be the word of men? If the Scriptures be not hearkened to, which are at hand, and whoſe divine Authority is acknowledged, it is impoſſible to hope, that under the dominion of a variety of prejudices, the words of weak and fal-

[w] *Matt.* xvii. 17.
[x] *Matt.* iii. 7.

lible men ſhould meet with a favourable reception. But God hath promiſed to beſtow a bleſſing upon his good ſeed, when ſown upon a proper, kindly ſoil; ſo that by due cultivation it will ſpring up, and bring forth good fruit plentifully, even *unto life eternal*[y].

Such was the ſalutary and bleſſed effect which attended the firſt preachers of the Goſpel; *the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with ſigns following*[z]. And when the miraculous power of his Grace, in the converſion of ſinners, had once ſpread the alarm: *Sirs, what muſt I do to be ſaved*[a]? was the natural reſult of the awakened impreſſion: They who were thus moved, *gladly received the word*[b]; *and believing, they rejoiced with joy unſpeakable, and full of glory*[c]: The Spirit of God giving this zeal and earneſtneſs to as many as were willing to embrace the offers of Goſpel Love. Some indeed were deaf to the call, and believed not: But, ſhall their unbelief be alleged to exculpate others, who, after

[y] *John* iv. 36. [z] *Mark* xvi. 20. [a] *Acts* xvi. 30.
[b] *Acts* ii. 41. [c] 1 *Pet.* i. 8.

their

their example, ſlight all the importunate and affectionate addreſſes which God is ever making to them? Such muſt endure the dreadful conſequences of their obſtinacy and infidelity. God hath ſupported his Word and his Faith with a notoriety of evidence ſufficient to ſatisfy every rational enquirer. If theſe accumulated proofs perſuade not, nothing can. God hath provided no remedy for thoſe who refuſe to liſten to ſuch indiſputable teſtimonies of his will and authority. They muſt periſh through their own gainſaying and reprobate heart.

So long as there remain men of this diſpoſition in the world, and ſuch there ever will be, ſo long will the Croſs of Chriſt be maligned. Freſh adverſaries will be perpetually ſpringing up, well trained and exerciſed in all the arts of ſophiſtry and deceit. Ancient and exploded objections will be from time to time revived; and the moſt plauſible appearances of truth and beauty will be employed in decorating anew the moſt offenſive opinions. Many indeed and various are the diſguiſes, and ſpecious

the fallacious coverings to elude detection: For error ſeldom ſhews itſelf in its own natural deformity, and the more ſubtle the poiſon, the infection is always the more malignant and fatal.

Such will ever be the caſe, when the pride of human underſtanding ſhall induce men to truſt wholly to the ſtrength of their own reaſon. This preſumption deceived the philoſophers of old. This faint glimmering light, in like manner, leads modern theoriſts into the mazes of error and miſtake; when the fooliſhneſs of man undertakes to ſolve the myſteries of God, and leaves them to ſtand or fall by the deciſion of that deceitful balance. Hence is it, that many who pretend a veneration for the honour of God and Religion, ſhall yet accuſtom themſelves to inſult the perſon, and to traduce the Goſpel of his Son; by reducing the former to the ſtate of a mere man, and eſteeming the latter as nothing more than a republication of the Law of Nature. Such reaſoners are not diſpoſed to receive even the plaineſt truths: They can ſee no neceſſity for any Saviour, but

but what their own imperfect virtue, or ideal ſincerity can procure; nor any more preferable excellency in the precepts of the Chriſtian, than in the dictates of natural Religion.

This is ſacrificing to the idols of a miſerably deluded imagination. They who can thus divert themſelves with the incenſe of their own perfumes, may not a little exult in thoſe applauſes which the ſtrangers to Revelation too inconſiderately beſtow upon them.

Happily however they have not, they cannot ſucceed in their vanities: The *wiſdom* of God, how boldly ſoever impeached, hath been fully *juſtified* by the zeal and vigilance *of her children*[d]: Whilſt theſe ſeats of uſeful and ingenuous learning remain; ſo long, may we pronounce, the Goſpel will be oppoſed in vain. The bleſſing of God hath ſo highly favoured theſe *ſchools of the Prophets*, that from thence have gone forth from time to time the ableſt champions

[d] *Matt.* ii. 9.

and

and guardians of *the faith which was once delivered to the saints* [e]; whose natural and acquired abilities, improved by the knowledge of God, and sanctified by his grace, have been nobly exerted in so meritorious a cause, and enabled them to detect the folly and imposture of that *wisdom which descendeth not from above*, and to prove it to be *earthly, sensual, devilish* [f].

We need not refer to the labours of former days: We can with pleasure easily recollect and chearfully boast of a race of present worthies, not inferior to the generations that are past, who, with an inexhaustible fund of literature, and with equal sanctity of life and manners, have eminently distinguished themselves as well in defence of Revelation in general, as of particular branches of it: Who have elucidated scriptural difficulties and obscurities; have with precision and accuracy marked the progressive stages of Prophecies already accomplished, as well as pointed out those that are successively receiving their accomplishment; have

[e] *Jude*, ver. 3.
[f] *James* iii. 15.

evinced

evinced the nature, importance, and credibility of thoſe miracles recorded in Scripture, which were the obvious and popular demonſtrations of a divine agency; and have vindicated the ſcriptural Doctrine of the Trinity, and the honour, divinity, and perſonality of their Redeemer, and of the Holy Ghoſt, from the exceptions of thoſe who have called them in queſtion, with an arrogance and malignity peculiarly their own.

It were endleſs to enumerate the long liſt of thoſe who have done honour to themſelves, and have reflected credit on the places of their education, by taking an active part in favour of the Goſpel of Chriſt, whenever *the way of truth* hath appeared to *be evil ſpoken of*[z], or inſulted. The extenſive knowledge, the ſound judgement, and the manly rational criticiſm diſplayed upon ſuch occaſions ought at leaſt to ſatisfy the objectors to it, that Chriſtianity is not that irrational unneceſſary ſyſtem they would wiſh to have it repre-

[z] 2 *Pet.* ii. 2.

ſented;

ſented; but that it is built upon the ſolid and irrefragable foundation of Reaſon and Argument, and is worthy their moſt deliberate attention. Would they but once allow themſelves maturely to conſider, and impartially to examine the ſtrength of the evidences adduced in ſupport of the truths of the Goſpel; they would ſoon diſcover the weakneſs of thoſe attempts which its adverſaries have pertinaciouſly made to undermine and ſubvert it; and how greatly an obedient, reverential regard to its precepts would contribute to the happineſs of mankind. Awakened by theſe impreſſions, they would proceed from ſtrength to ſtrength; would feel the happy effects of increaſing light and conviction; would acknowledge the excellency, wiſdom, and neceſſity of Revelation; and how much it is their duty and their intereſt ſeriouſly to reflect upon the riſe and foundation of thoſe principles, which have hitherto ſeparated them from the knowledge and love of God in Chriſt; and of what importance it is that they ſhould no longer continue to cheriſh in themſelves, or encourage in others

an evil heart of unbelief[h]. By purſuing theſe enquiries in the ſpirit of humility and devotion, they would become well qualified, from their own experience, and would rejoice to teſtify, with what ſingular truth and propriety the apoſtolical inference in the language of the text may be applied to unbelievers in general, that *the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heart it.*

[h] *Heb.* iii. 12.

FINIS.

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